

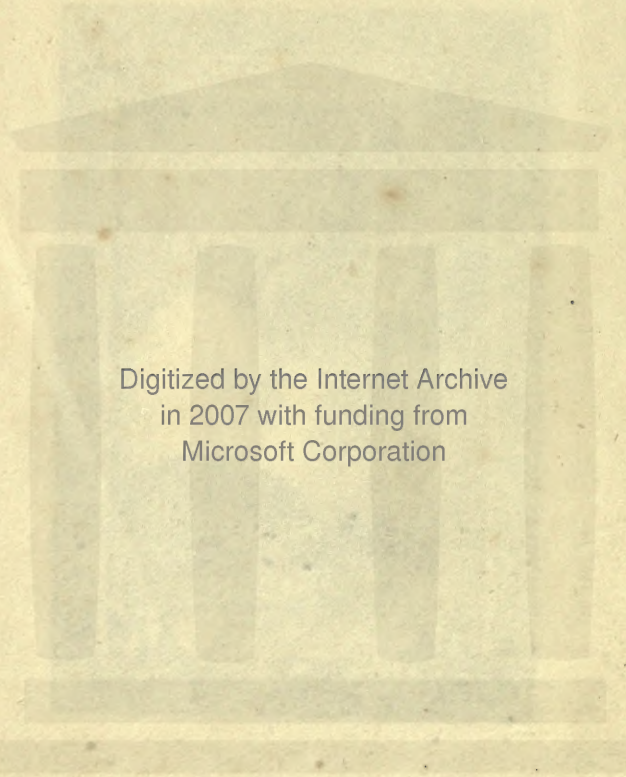


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HISTORY

ANGLO-SAXONS

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE
NORMAN CONQUEST

BY HENRY TRENKLE, F.R.S.

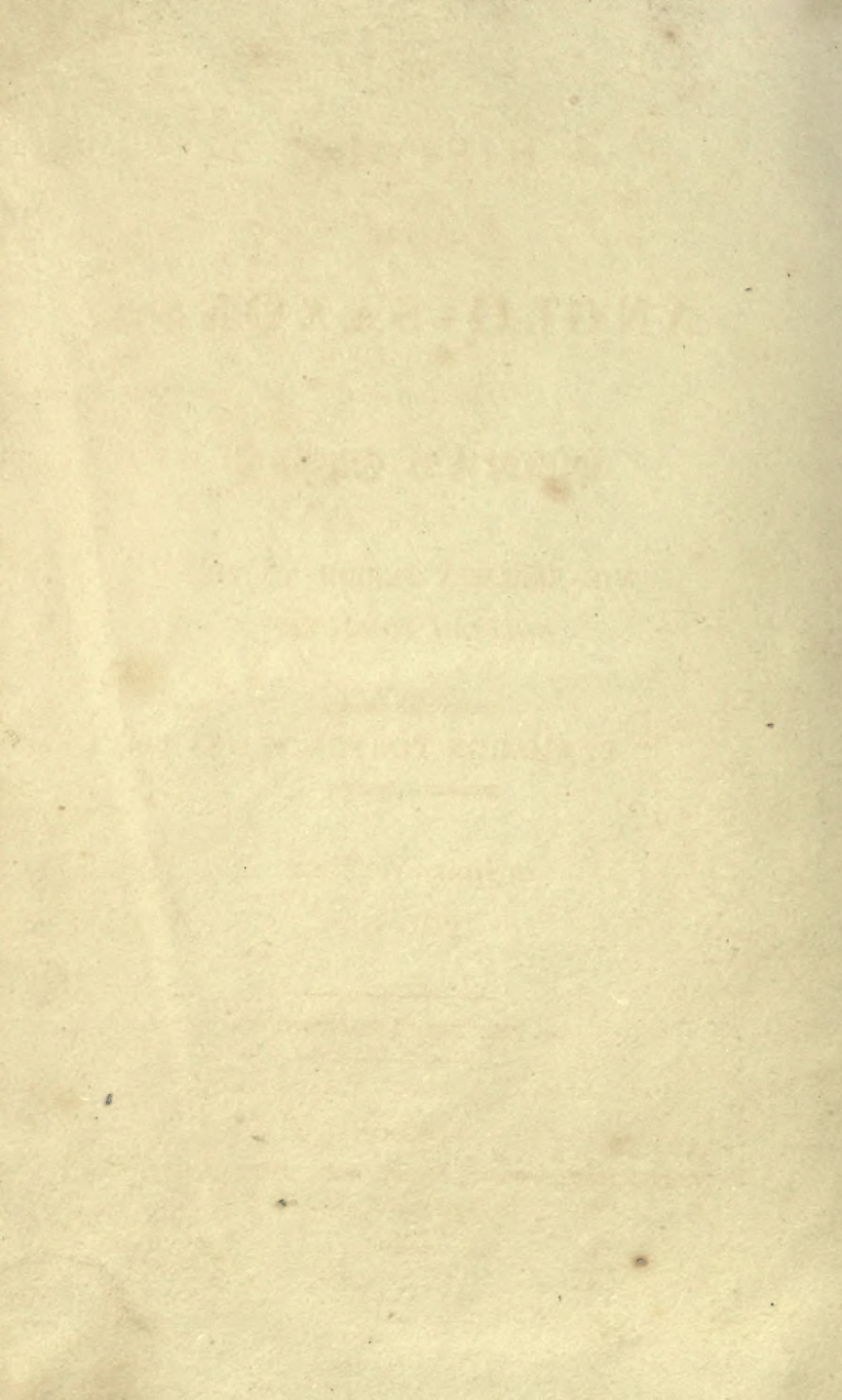
IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON:

1845.

PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.



THE
HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS:

COMPRISING THE
History of England

FROM
THE EARLIEST PERIOD TO THE
NORMAN CONQUEST.

By SHARON TURNER, F.A.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW. •

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THE
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OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK IV.

CHAP. V.

The Reigns of ETHELBALD *and* ETHELBERT.—
ALFRED's Education.

BY wresting the sceptre of Wessex from the hand of his father, Ethelbald gained a very short interval of regal pomp. His father survived the disappointment of his hope and the diminution of his power but two years, and Ethelbald outlived him scarcely three more. Ethelwulf, by his will, left landed possessions to three of his sons; and it is a proof of his placable disposition, that Ethelbald was one; the others were Ethelred and Alfred; the sur-

CHAP.
V.

856—860.

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IV.

856.

vivor of the three was to inherit the ' bequest. His other son, his daughter, and kinsmen, and also his nobles, partook of his testamentary liberality. His will displayed both the equity and the piety of his mind.²

SOON after Ethelwulf's decease, Ethelbald married his widow, Judith, in defiance of religious institutions and the customs of every Christian state.³ On the exhortations of Swithin, he is represented to have dismissed her, and to have passed the remainder of his short life in reputation and justice.⁴ He died in 860.

Judith's
third mar-
riage.

SOME time after the death of Ethelbald, Judith sold her possessions in England, and returned to her father; she lived at Senlis with regal dignity. Here she was seen by Baldwin, surnamed the Arm of Iron, whom she married. He was descended from the count, who had

¹ See Alfred's will, published by Mr. Astle, which recites this devise.

² He ordered throughout all his lands, that in every ten manors one poor person, *either* a native or a foreigner, should be maintained in food and clothing, as long as the country contained men and cattle. He left the pope an hundred mancusses, and two hundred to illuminate St. Peter's and St. Paul's churches at Rome on Easter eve and the ensuing dawn. Asser, 13.

³ Asser, 23. But this author, and they who follow him, are wrong in stating that this was against the custom of the pagans; for Eadbald, king of Kent, had done the same in 616; and the Saxon Chronicle, in mentioning that event, says, he lived "on hæthenum theape spa, that he hæfde bi ræbep lape to five," p. 26.

⁴ Matt. West. 310. Rudborne, 204.

cultivated and occupied Flanders.⁵ The pope reconciled him with the king of France, her father⁶, who gave to Baldwin all the region between the Scheld, the Sambre, and the sea, and created him count of the empire, that he might be the bulwark of the French kingdom against the Northmen.⁷

CHAP.
V.
865.

BALDWIN built Bruges in 856, as a fortress to coerce them, and died in 880, having enjoyed his honours with peculiar celebrity.⁸

ON the death of Ethelbald, the kingdom of Wessex became the possession of Ethelbert, his brother, who had been already reigning in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex.

860.
Ethelbert
accedes.

⁵ *Annales Bertiniani* Bouquet, tom. vii. p. 77.—The *Genealogia comitum Flandriæ scripta seculo 12*, says, A. 792, Lidricus Harlebecencis comes videns Flandriam vacuum et incultam et nemorosam occupavit eam. Ibid. p. 81. he was the great grandfather of Baldwin. Previous to Baldwin, Flanders was in the hands of foresters, *Espinoy's Recherches*, p. 5.

⁶ The pope's letters to Charles, and his queen, *Hermen-trudes*, are in *Miræi opera diplomatica*, i. p. 132. *Hincmar's* letter to the pope, stating what he had done in obedience to his order, is in the same work, p. 25. The pope hints to Charles, that if his anger lasted, Baldwin might join the Northmen.

⁷ *Meyer Annales Flandriæ*, 13. For the same purpose, Theodore was made the first count of Holland at this time, *ibid.*

⁸ The author of the *Life of S. Winnoc*, written in the eleventh century, says, Flanders never had a man his superior in talent and warlike ability, 7 Bouquet, p. 379.

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IV.

860.

IN his days, the tranquillity of England was again endangered; a large fleet of the northern vikings suddenly appeared off Winchester and ravaged it; but, as they were retiring with their plunder, they were overtaken and chased to their ships by the earls of Hampshire and Berkshire.

THEIR commander led them from England to France; with above 300 ships they ascended the Seine, and Charles averted their hostilities from his own domains by money. The winter forbidding them to navigate the sea, they dispersed themselves along the Seine and the adjacent shores in different bands.⁹ Such incursions induced the Flemings to build castles and fortified places.¹⁰

His death.
866.

IN 864, they wintered in Thanet. While the Kentish men were offering money, to be spared from their ravages, they broke from their camp at night, and ravaged all the east of the county. Ethelbert was, like his brother, taken off prematurely, after a short, but honourable reign of six years, and was buried in Shireburn.¹¹ He

⁹ *Annales Bertiniani*. One expression of these annals is curious: it says, that the Northmen divided themselves, secundum suas sodalitates, as if they had been an union of different companies associated for the expedition.

¹⁰ Ob tam furibundas septentrionalium barbarorum incursiones Flandri in suis pagis castellis que munitiones facere ceperunt. *Meyer. Ann. Fland.* 12.

¹¹ *Asser*, 14.

left some children ¹², but Ethelred, his brother, CHAP.
 acceded in their stead. V.

DURING the reigns of his brethren, Alfred was quietly advancing into youth and manhood. When an illustrious character excites our attention, it is natural to inquire whether any unusual circumstances distinguished his early years. This curiosity arises, not from the expectation of beholding an extraordinary being, acting to astonish us in the features and dress of infancy, because it is probable, that in the beginning of life no indications of future greatness appear. Healthy children are in general sprightly; and the man destined to interest ages by his matured intellect, cannot be distinguished amid the universal animation and activity of his delighted play-fellows. But as the evolution of genius, and its luxuriant fertility depend much upon the accidents of its experience, it becomes important to notice those events which have occurred to an illustrious individual, during the first periods of life, that we may trace their influence in producing or determining the tendencies of his manly character, and in shaping his future fortunes. The minds of all men, in every portion of their lives,

866.
 Alfred's
 youth and
 education

¹² They are mentioned in Alfred's will. About this time, Ruric, a prince of the Waregi, obtained the empire of Russia, and fixing his seat at Novogardia, which he adorned with buildings, occasioned all Russia to have that name. Chronicon Theod. Kiow, cited by Langb. i. p. 554.

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866.

are composed of the impressions received, and the ideas retained from their preceding experience. As the events of childhood affect its future youth, those of its youth influence its manhood, and that also impresses its subsequent age. Hence they who wish to study the formation of great characters must attentively consider the successive circumstances of their previous stages of life.

THE first years of Alfred's life were marked by incidents unusual to youth. When he was but four years old, he was sent by his father to travel by land through France, and over the Alps to Rome, accompanied with a large retinue. He was brought back in safety from this journey; and in his seventh year he attended his father in a similar expedition, and resided with him a year in that distinguished city. Although Alfred at these periods was but a child, yet the varied successions of scenes and incidents, and the new habits, privations, alarms, and vicissitudes with which such dangerous and toilsome journeys must have abounded, could not occur to his perception without powerfully exciting and instructing his young intellect. His residence twice at Rome, in which so many monuments of ancient art were then visible to rouse the enthusiasm and interest the curiosity of the observer, must have left impressions on his mind, not likely to have forsaken it, of the superiority and civilisation of the people, whose celebrity was every where resounded, and whose noble

works he was contemplating.¹³ The survey of the ruins of the Capitol has excited some to the arduous toil of literary composition¹⁴, and their remembrance may have produced in the mind of Alfred that eagerness for knowledge which so usefully distinguished his maturer years.

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V.
866.

IN his eighth year he received a new train of associations from his residence in the court of France, during his father's courtship and marriage with Judith. An urbanity of manners, and a cultivation of knowledge, vigorous because recent, distinguished the Franks at that time from the other Gothic nations. Alfred seems to have been inspired by them with some desire of improvement, though the occupations and contrary tastes of his father confined his wishes to a latent sentiment.

FROM his eighth year to his twelfth, his biography is less certain. If it be true, as some chronicles intimate, that infirm health occasioned his father, in obedience to the superstition of the day, to send him to Modwenna, a religious lady in Ireland, celebrated into sanctity¹⁵, such an

¹³ Besides the remains of ancient taste, Alfred must have seen there the most perfect productions of the time, as the pope was perpetually receiving a great variety of rich presents from Constantinople, and every other Christian country. See many of these mentioned in Anastasius.

¹⁴ Mr. Gibbon mentions that he conceived the first idea of writing his history while sitting on the ruins of the Capitol.

¹⁵ Hist. aurea Johan. Tinmuth, MSS. in Bib. Bodl. cited by Dugdale, Monast. i. p. 197. Higden also mentions it, p. 256.

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IV.

866.

expedition must, by its new and contrasting scenes, have kept his curiosity alive, and have amplified his information. The disposition to improve may also have been increased, if not produced, within him by the reputation of his namesake, Alfred of Northumbria.

BUT though Alfred's mind may have abounded with excited capability, eager to know, and emulous of distinction¹⁶, it had received none of that fruitful cultivation which is gained in literary education, from the transmitted wisdom of other times; from the unobtrusive eloquence of books. Alfred had been a favourite; and of such children, indulgences and ignorance are too often the lot. Happily, his father's misfortunes and new connection rescued him from that ruin of temper and mind which sometimes disappoints the fairest promises of nature.

ALFRED's intellect first displayed itself in a fondness for the only mental object which then existed to attract it. This was the Anglo-Saxon poetry. It was in a rude and simple state, and barren of all that we now admire in the productions of the muses. But it was stately and heroical. It tended to confer fame, and was therefore adapted to rouse the mind to seek it. Hence to Alfred the Saxon poems, being the best which were then accessible to him, were

¹⁶ Asser says of him, *cui ab incunabulis ante omnia et cum omnibus presentis vitæ studiis, sapientiæ desiderium cum nobilitate generis, nobilis mentis ingenium supplevit*, p. 16.

impressive and delightful. By day and by night, he was an assiduous auditor, whenever they were recited.¹⁷ As he listened, the first aspirations of a soaring mind seem to have arisen within him, and they prepared him to desire larger draughts of that intellectual fountain, whose scantiest waters were so sweet. He became at last to be a versifier himself. But the great cause of the dearth of intellectual cultivation at that period was, that few would learn to read. Alfred had passed eleven years without having acquired this easy though inestimable accomplishment. A prince, son of a father who had been educated for the church; who had twice visited Rome, and resided at Paris after Charlemagne had improved his people, was yet passing into youth without the simplest of all tuition, which the poorest infant is now invited and urged to attain. That he received it at last was owing to his step-mother, Judith. When Alfred was twelve years old, she was sitting one day, surrounded by her family, with a manuscript of Saxon poetry in her hands. As Aldhelm and Cedmon had written poems of great popularity, it may have contained some of theirs. That she was able to read is not surprising, because she was a Franc, and the Franks had received from the Anglo-Saxons a taste for literary pursuits, and were cultivating them with superior

¹⁷ Asser, p. 16.

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ardour. With a happy judgment she proposed it as a gift to him who would the soonest learn to read it. The whole incident may have been chance play, but it was fruitful of consequences. The elder princes, one then a king, the others in mature youth or manhood, thought the reward inadequate to the task, and were silent. But the mind of Alfred, captivated by the prospect of information, and pleased with the beautiful decoration of the first letter of the writing, inquired if she actually intended to give it to such of her children as would the soonest learn to understand and repeat it. His mother repeating the promise with a smile of joy at the question, he took the book, found out an instructor, and learnt to read it. When his industry had crowned his wishes with success, he recited it to her.¹⁸ To this important, though seemingly trivial incident, we owe all the intellectual cultivation, and all the literary works of Alfred; and all the benefit which by these he imparted to his countrymen. If this family conversation had not occurred, Alfred would probably have lived and died as ignorant, as unimportant, and as little known as his three brothers. For the momentous benefit thus begun to Alfred, the memory of Judith deserves our gratitude. His brothers had reached manhood without having been taught letters by their

¹⁸ Asser, 16.

father, who, though he had received an ecclesiastical education, had left both them and Alfred illiterate. Nine years old at his father's death, and yet wholly uninstructed; with one brother on the throne, and two more so near it as ultimately to succeed to it, equally uneducated; and surrounded by nobles as ignorant, and with no lettered clergy about the throne, whence could Alfred have received this necessary introduction to all his improvement, if the more intelligent Judith, the grand-daughter of Charlemagne, had not been transplanted by Ethelwulph from Paris to England, and even detained there by Ethelbald. This French princess was the kind Minerva from whom arose the first shoots of that intellectual character which we admire in Alfred. To such remote and apparently unconnected causes do we often owe our greatest blessings.

BUT in learning to read Saxon, Alfred had only entered a dark and scanty anti-room of knowledge. The Saxon language was not at that day the repository of literature. The learned of the Anglo-Saxons, Bede, Alcuin, and others, had written their useful works in Latin, and translations of the classics had not then been thought of. Alfred's first acquisition was therefore of a nature which rather augmented his own conviction of his ignorance, than supplied him with the treasures which he coveted. He had yet to master the language of ancient Rome,

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before he could become acquainted with the compositions which contained all the facts of history, the elegance of poetry, and the disquisitions of philosophy. He knew where these invaluable riches lay, but he was unable to appropriate them to his improvement. We are told that it was one of his greatest lamentations, and, as he conceived, among his severest misfortunes, and which he often mentioned with deep sighs, that when he had youth and leisure, and permission to learn, he could not find teachers. No good masters, capable of initiating him in that language, in which the minds he afterwards studied had conversed and written, were at that time to be found in all the kingdom of Wessex.¹⁹

His love for knowledge made him neither effeminate nor slothful. The robust labours of the chase ingrossed a large portion of his leisure; and he is panegyricized for his incomparable skill and felicity in this rural art.²⁰ To Alfred, whose life was indispensably a life of great warlike exertion, the exercise of hunting may have

¹⁹ Asser, 17.

²⁰ Asser, 16. Though men fond of literature have not often excelled in the robust exercises, yet some remarkable characters have been distinguished for corporal agility. Thus the great Pythagoras was a successful boxer in the Olympic games; the first who boxed according to art. Cleanthes the Stoic was a similar adept. His scholar, Chrysippus, the acutest of the Stoics, was at first a racer; and even Plato himself was a wrestler at the Isthmian and Pythian games. Bently on Phalaris, 51—54.

been salutary and even needful. Perhaps his commercial and polished posterity may wisely permit amusements more philanthropic, to diminish their attachment to this dubious pursuit.

CHAP.
V.
866.

HE followed the labours of the chase as far as Cornwall. His fondness for this practice is a striking proof of his activity of disposition, because he appears to have been afflicted with a disease which would have sanctioned indolence in a person less alert. This malady assumed the appearance of a slow fever, of an unusual kind, with symptoms that made some call it the piles. It pursued him from his infancy. But his life and actions show, that, though this debilitating disease was succeeded by another that haunted him incessantly with tormenting agony, nothing could suppress his unwearied and inextinguishable genius. Though environed with difficulties which would have shipwrecked any other man, he spurned at the opposing storm; he even mastered the raging whirlwind, and made it waft him to virtue and to fame.

HIS religious impressions led him from his childhood to be a frequent visitor at sacred places, for the purposes of giving alms, and offering prayer. It was from this practice, that as he was hunting in Cornwall, near Liskéard, and observing a village church near, he dismounted, and went into it. A Cornish man of religion, called St. Gueryr, had been buried there. The name implied that he had possessed medical

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868.

powers or reputation ; and with a sudden hope of obtaining relief from his distressing malady, Alfred prostrated himself there in silent prayer to God, and remained a long time mentally petitioning that his sufferings might be alleviated. He solicited any change of the divine visitations that would not make him useless in body or contemptible in his personal appearance ; for he was afraid of leprosy or blindness, but he implored relief. His devotions ended, he quitted the tomb of the saint, and resumed his journey. No immediate effect followed. He had often prayed before for relief in vain. Happily in no long space afterwards his constitution experienced a beneficial alteration, and this complaint entirely ceased, though after his marriage it was succeeded by another and a worse, which lasted till his death.²¹

For a while we must leave Alfred aspiring to become the student, to describe that storm of desolation and ferocious war which was proceeding from the North to intercept the progress, and disturb the happiness of the future king ; and to lay waste the whole island, with havock the most sanguinary, and ruin the most permanent.

²¹ Asser, 40. Flor. Wig. 309. Guerir, in Cornish, signifies to heal or cure. Camden places the church near Liskeard. St. Neot lived here after Guerir, and it acquired the name from him of Neotatoke. Whit. Neot. 109.

CHAP. VI.

The Accession of ETHELRED, the third Son of ETHELWULPH. — The Arrival of the Sons of RAGNAR LODBROG in ENGLAND. — Their Revenge on ELLA. — Conquests and Depredations. ETHELRED's Death.

AS the life of Ragnar Lodbrog had disturbed the peace of many regions of Europe, his death became the source of peculiar evil to England. When his sons heard of his death in the prison in Northumbria, they determined on revenge. Their transient hostilities as sea-kings were laid aside for the gratification of this passion; and as their father's fame was the conversation and pride of the North, they found that wherever they spread news of his fate, and their own resolutions to avenge it, their feelings were applauded, and auxiliaries procured to join them, from every part. Bands of warriors confederated from every region for this vindictive object. Jutes, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Russians, and others; all the fury and all the valour of the North assembled for the expedition¹, while

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¹ 2 Langb. 278. Saxo, 176. Al. Beverl. 92. Hunt. 347. M. West. 316. Bromton, 803. Sim. Dun. 13. Al. Riev. 353.

BOOK none of the Anglo-Saxon kings even suspected
 IV. the preparations.

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EIGHT kings and twenty earls, the children, relatives, and associates of Ragnar, were its leaders.² Their armament assembled without molestation, and when it had become numerous enough to promise success to their adventure, Halfden, Inguar, and Hubba, three of Ragnar's sons, assumed the command, sailed out of the Baltic, and conducted it safely to the English coasts. By some error in the pilotage, or accident of weather, or actual policy, it passed Northumbria, and anchored off the shores of East Anglia.

ETHELRED was scarcely seated on his brother's throne, before the great confederacy began to arrive. It found the country in a state auspicious to an invasion. Four distinct governments divided its natural force, whose narrow policy saw nothing but triumph and safety in the destruction of each other. One of these, the peculiar object of the hostility of the North, was plunged in a civil warfare.

Of the Anglo-Saxon governments, the kingdom of Northumbria had been always the most perturbed. Usurper murdering usurper, is the pervading incident. A crowd of ghastly mo-

² The kings were Bacseg, Halfdene, Inguar, Ubba, Guthrums, Oskitel, Amund and Eowls. Al. Bev. 93. Simeon adds to the kings, Sidroc, with a jarl of that name. Frena and Harald, p. 14.

narchs pass swiftly along the page of history as we gaze ; and scarcely was the sword of the assassin sheathed before it was drawn against its master, and he was carried to the sepulchre which he had just closed upon another. In this manner, during the last century and a half, no fewer than seventeen sceptred chiefs hurled each other from their joyless throne³, and the deaths of the greatest number were accompanied by hecatombs of their friends.

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WHEN the Northern fleet suddenly appeared off East Anglia, such sanguinary events were still disturbing Northumbria. Osbert had been four years expelled by Ella from the throne which he had usurped from another, and at this juncture was formidable enough to dare his rival again to the ambitious field.

THE Danish chieftains who first landed, did not at once rush to their destined prey. Whether accident or policy had occasioned them to disembark in East Anglia, they made it a beneficial event. Awing the country by a force which the winds had never wafted from Denmark⁴ before, they quietly passed the winter in their camp, collecting provisions and uniting their friends. They demanded a supply of horses from the king, who complied with their request, and

³ Ella is called by Huntingdon degenerem, 349. Asser describes him as tyrannum quendam Ella nomine non de regali prosapia progenitum super regni apicem constituerant, p. 18.

⁴ Al. Bev. 93.

BOOK mounted the greatest part of their ⁵ army.

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He attempted no enmity; he suffered them to enjoy their wintry feasts unmolested; no alliance with the other Saxon kingdoms was made during the interval; each state looked on with hope, that the collected tempest was to burst upon another; and as the menaced government was a rival, nothing but advantage was foreseen from its destruction.

THE Northern kings must have contemplated this behaviour with all the satisfaction and contempt of meditative mischief and conscious superiority. The Northumbrian usurpers at last sheathed, though tardily, the swords of contending ambition; and, on the advice of their nobles, united for their mutual defence and the general safety. ⁶

THE invaders, though in many bands, like the Grecian host before Troy, yet submitted to the predominance of Ingwar and Ubbo, two of the sons of Ragnar. Of these two, Ingwar was distinguished for a commanding genius, and Ubbo for his fortitude; both were highly courageous, and inordinately cruel. ⁷

⁵ Asser, 15. The Icelanders intimate that the Northmen on their first arrival found Ella too powerful; and that Ingwar negotiated with him, and cultivated treasonable intercourse with his subjects, till the complete arrival of the invaders enabled him to prosecute his revenge. 2 Langb. 278.

⁶ Hunt. 349. Asser, 18. So Sim. Dun. 14.

⁷ Hunt. 348. Ubbo is called chief of the Frisians by Sim. Dun. 70. Adam of Bremen describes Ingwar as the most cruel of all, and as destroying Christians every where in torments, p. 14. He is also called Ivar.

IN the next spring, the invaders roused from their useful repose, and marched into Yorkshire. The metropolis of the county was their first object; and, on the first of March, it yielded to their attack. Devastation followed their footsteps; they extended their divisions to the Tyne, but, without passing it, returned to York.⁸

OSBERT and Ella, having completed their pacification, moved forwards, accompanied with eight of their earls, and, on the 12th of April, assaulted the Northmen near York. The Danes, surprised by the attack, fled into the city. The English pursued with the eagerness of anticipated victory, broke down the slight ⁹ walls, and entered, conflicting promiscuously with their enemies; but, having abandoned the great advantage of their superior discipline, the English rushed only to destruction. No nation could hope to excel the Northmen in personal intrepidity or manual dexterity; from their childhood they were exercised in single combat and disorderly warfare; the disunited Northumbrians were therefore cut down with irremediable slaughter. Osbert and Ella, their chiefs, and most of their army, perished.¹⁰ The sons of Ragnar inflicted a cruel and inhuman retaliation

⁸ Sim. Dun. 14. In this year Ealstan died, the celebrated bishop and statesman. Asser, 18.

⁹ Asser remarks, that York had not at this period walls so firm and stable as in the latter part of Alfred's reign, 18.

¹⁰ Asser, 18. Sim. Dun. 14. The place where they fell was in Bromton's time called Ellescroft. Bromt. 803.

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on Ella, for their father's sufferings. They divided his back, spread his ribs into the figure of an eagle, and agonised his lacerated flesh by the addition of the saline stimulant.¹¹

AFTER this battle, decisive of the fate of Northumbria, it appeared no more as an Anglo-Saxon kingdom. The people beyond the Tyne appointed Egbert as their sovereign, but in a few years he was expelled, and one Ricseg took the shadowy diadem. In 876 he died with grief at the distresses of his country, and another Egbert obtained the nominal honours.¹² But Ingwar was the Danish chief, who, profiting by his victory, assumed the sceptre of Northumbria from the Humber to the Tyne.¹³

A DISMAL sacrifice had been offered up to the manes of Ragnar, yet the invaders did not depart. It was soon evident that their object was to conquer, in order to occupy; desolation followed their victories, because Northmen could not move to battle without it; but while plunder

¹¹ Frag. Isl. 2 Lang. 279. Ragnar Saga, ib. The Scalld Sigvatr. ib. Saxo Gram. 177. This punishment was often inflicted by these savage conquerors on their enemies. See some instances in Stephanus, 193.

¹² Sim. Dun. 14. Matt. West. 326, 327, 328. Leland's Collect. ii. p. 373.

¹³ The language of the Northern writers is, that Ivar obtained that part of England which his ancestors had possessed. Ragnar Saga, in Torfæus Series Dan. Olaff Tryggv. Saga, ib. 375. This adds that he reigned a long while, and died without issue, 376. So Frag. Isl. 2 Langb. 279.

was the concomitant of their march, dominion became the passion of their chiefs. CHAP.
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THE country was affected by a great dearth this year, which the presence of such enemies must have enhanced. Alfred had now reached his nineteenth year; he was raised by his brother to an inferior participation of the regal dignity, and he married Ealswitha, the daughter of a Mercian nobleman.¹⁴ The earnestness with which Alfred in his *Boetius* speaks of conjugal affection, implies that this union contributed greatly to his felicity. 867.
Alfred's
marriage.

THE Northmen having resolved on their plans of occupation and conquest, began to separate into divisions. One body rebuilt York, cultivated the country round it, and continued to colonise it.¹⁵ It may be presumed that Ingwar headed these. Other bands devoted themselves to promote the ambition of those chieftains who also aspired to royal settlements.

THIS army passed the Humber into Mercia, and established themselves at ^{868.} Nottingham,

¹⁴ Ethelred, surnamed the Large. The mother of Alfred's queen was Eadburh, of the family of the Mercian kings. Asser frequently saw her before her death, and calls her a venerable woman. Her daughter's merit as a wife leads us to infer the excellence and careful nurture of the mother, 19.

¹⁵ Sim. Dun. Vita St. Cuthberti, 71.

¹⁶ Its British name was Tiguo Cobauc, the house of caves. Asser, 19. In the charter of 868, it is called Snothryngnam, which in the days of Ingulf had become changed to Nothingham, p. 18, 19.

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where they wintered. Alarmed by their approach, Burrhed, the king, and his nobles, sent an urgent embassy to West Saxony for assistance. Ethelred, with judicious policy, hastened to his wishes. He joined the Mercian with Alfred and the whole force of his dominions; and their united armies marched towards the frontier through which the invaders had penetrated.

THEY found the Northmen in possession of Nottingham; the Danes discerned the great superiority of the allied armies, and remained within the strong walls and castle of the ¹⁷town. The Anglo-Saxons were incapable of breaking through these fortifications, and their mutual respect, after an ineffectual struggle, occasioned a pacification, advantageous only to the Danes. The invaders were to retreat to York, and the kings of Wessex, satisfied with having delivered Mercia, and not discerning the danger of suffering the Northmen to remain in any part of the island, returned home.¹⁸

¹⁷ Paganī munitiōne fortissimorum murorum et areis validissimæ confidentes. Ingulf, 20. Burrhed in a charter to Croyland, dated Aug. 1. 868., states himself to have made it at Snotryngham before his brother's friends, and all his people assembled to besiege the pagans.

¹⁸ Asser, 20., mentions no conflict; the Saxon Chronicle asserts, that an attack was made on the intrenchments, but disgraces the Anglo-Saxons, by adding, that it was not severe, p. 79. The monk of Croyland praises the young earl Algar, for his prowess in the affair, p. 18.

THE Northmen retired to York with great booty.¹⁹ In this year two of the most terrible calamities to mankind occurred, a great famine, and its inevitable attendant, a mortality of cattle, and of the human race.²⁰ The general misery presented no temptations to the rapacity of the Northmen, and they remained a year in their Yorkshire stations.²¹

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WHEN spring arrived, they threw off all disguise, and signalised this fourth year of their residence in England by a series of hostilities the most fatal, and of ravages the most cruel. They embarked on the Humber, and sailing to Lincolnshire, landed at Humberstan in Lindsey.²² From this period, language cannot describe their devastations. It can only repeat the words plunder, murder, rape, famine and distress. It can only enumerate towns, villages, churches and monasteries, harvests, and libraries, ransacked and burnt. But by the incessant repetition, the horrors are diminished; and we read, without emotion, the narration of deeds which rent the hearts of thousands with anguish, and inflicted wounds on human happiness and human improvement, which ages with difficulty healed. Instead, therefore, of general statements, which glide as unimpressively over the

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¹⁹ Ingulf, 18—20.

²⁰ Asser, 20.

²¹ Sax. Chron. 80. Asser, 20.

²² Lindsey was the largest of the three parts into which the county of Lincoln was anciently divided.

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mind as the arrow upon ice, it may be preferable to select a few incidents, to imply those scenes of desolation, which, when stated in the aggregate, only confuse and overwhelm the sensibility of our perception.

AFTER destroying the monastery, and slaying all the monks of the then much admired abbey of Bardeney, they employed the summer in desolating the country around with sword and fire.²³ About Michaelmas they passed the Witham, and entered the district of²⁴ Kesteven, with the same dismal ministers of fate. The sovereign of the country made no effort of defence; but a patriotic few attempted to procure for themselves and the rest, that protection which their government did not impart.

THE brave earl Algar, in September, drew out all the youth of Hoiland²⁵; his two seneschals, Wibert and Leofric, whose names the aged rustics that survived, attached, with grateful memory, to their possessions, which they called Wiberton and Lefrinkton, assembled from Deep-

²³ Ingulf, 20.

²⁴ Kesteven was another of the three districts into which Lincolnshire was anciently divided.

²⁵ Hoiland, or Holland; the southern division of Lincolnshire, which extended from the Witham to the Nine. Like the Batavian Holland, it was so moist, that the surface shook if stamped upon, and the print of the feet remained on it. It was composed of two parts, the Lower and the Upper. The lower was full of impassable marshes; huge banks preserved it from the ocean. Camd. 459.

ing, Langtoft, and Boston, 300 valiant and well appointed men; 200 more joined him from the Croyland monastery. They were composed chiefly of fugitives, and were led by Toliuss, who had assumed the cowl; but who, previous to his entering the sacred profession, had been celebrated for his military character. Morcard, lord of Brunne, added his family, who were undaunted and numerous. Osgot, the sheriff of Lincoln, a courageous and formidable veteran, collected 500 more from the inhabitants of the county. These generous patriots united in Kesteven, with the daring hope of checking, by their valour, the progress of the ferocious invaders.

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ON the feast of St. Maurice, they attacked the advanced bands of the Northmen with such auspicious bravery, that they slew three of their kings, and many of the soldiers. They chased the rest to the gates of their intrenchments, and, notwithstanding a fierce resistance, they assailed these, till the advance of night compelled the valiant earl to call off his noble army.²⁶

WITH an unpropitious celerity, the other kings of the Northmen, who had spread themselves over the country to plunder it, Godrun, Bacseg, Oskitul, Halfden, and Amond, together with

²⁶ Ingulf, 20. Chron. St. Petri de Burgo, 16. The place where these three kings fell, obtained the name of Trekyng-ham. It was before named Lacundon. Ing. 21.

BOOK Frena, Ingwar, Ubbo, and the two Sidrocs,
IV. hastened, during the night, to re-unite their
870. bands in the camp. An immense booty, and a
numerous multitude of women and children,
their spoil, accompanied them.

THE news of their unfortunate arrival reached the English stations, and produced a lamentable effect; for a large part of the small army, affrighted by the vast disproportion of numbers which in the ensuing morn they must encounter, fled during the darkness of the night. This desertion might have inspired and justified a general flight; but the rest, as though they had felt that their post was the Thermopylæ of England, with generous magnanimity and religious solemnity, prepared themselves to perish for their country and their faith.

THE brave Algar managed his diminished force with the wisest economy, and with soldierly judgment. He selected the valiant Tolius, and 500 intrepid followers, for the post of the greatest danger, and therefore placed them on his right. Morcard, the lord of Brunne, and his companions in arms, he stationèd with them. On the left of his array, Osgot, the illustrious sheriff, with his 500 soldiers, took his allotted post with Harding of Rehale, and the young and impetuous citizens of Stamford. Algar himself, with his seneschals, chose the centre, that they might be ready to aid either division as exigency required.

THE Northmen, in the first dawn of light,

buried their three kings in the spot thence called Trekyngham, and leaving two other of their royal leaders, with four jarls, to guard their camp and captives, they moved forwards with four kings and eight jarls, burning with fury for the disgrace of their friends on the preceding day.

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THE English, from their small number, contracted themselves into a wedge; against the impetus of the Northern darts, they presented an impenetrable arch of shields, and they repelled the violence of the horse by a dense arrangement of their spears. Lessoned by their intelligent commanders, they maintained their station immoveable the whole day.

EVENING advanced, and their unconquered valour had kept off enemies, whose numbers had menaced them with inevitable ruin. The Northmen had spent their darts in vain. Their horsemen were wearied with the ineffectual toil of the day; and their whole army, despairing of success, in feigned confusion withdrew. Elated at the sight of the retreating foe, the English, quitting their array, sprang forwards to complete their conquest. In vain their hoary leaders expostulated, in vain proclaimed ruin if they separated. Intoxicated with the prospect of un hoped success, they forgot that it was the skill of their commanders, which, more than their own bravery, had protected them. They forgot the fewness of their numbers, and the

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yet immense superiority of their foes. They saw flight, and they thought only of victory. Dispersed in their eager pursuit, they displayed to the Northern chiefs a certain means of conquest. Suddenly the Pagans rallied in every part, and rushing upon the scattered English, surrounded them on every side. It was then they saw what fatal rashness had involved in equal ruin their country and themselves. They had almost rescued England from destruction by their valour and conduct; and now, by a moment's folly, all their advantages were lost. For a while, Algar, the undaunted earl, and the self-devoting Toliús, with the other chiefs, discreet even in the midst of approaching ruin, by gaining a little eminence, protracted their fate. But as the dispersed English could not be reunited, as the dissolved arrangement could not be recomposed, the valour and skill of the magnanimous leaders, however exalted and unexcelled, could only serve to multiply the victims of the day. The possibility of victory was vanished. The six chiefs beheld their followers falling fast around; death approached themselves. Mounting upon the bodies of their friends, they returned blow for blow, till, fainting under innumerable wounds, they expired upon the corse of their too impetuous companions.²⁷

²⁷ This interesting narrative is in *Ingulf*, 20—21.

A FEW youths of Sutton and Gedeney threw their arms into the neighbouring wood, and escaping with difficulty in the following night, they communicated the fatal catastrophe to the monastery of Croyland²⁸, while its abbot and the society were performing matins. The dismal tidings threw terror into every breast; all foreboded that the next stroke of calamity would fall on them. The abbot, retaining with him the aged monks and a few infants, sent away the youthful and the strong, with their relics, jewels, and charters, to hide themselves in the nearest marshes, till the demons of slaughter had passed by. With anxious haste they loaded a boat with their treasures. They threw their domestic property into the waters, but as part of the table of the great altar, plated with gold, rose above the waves, they drew it out, and replaced it in the abbey.

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THE flames of the villages in Kesteven now gradually spread towards them, and the clamours of the fierce pagans drew nearer. Alarmed, they resumed their boat, and reached the wood of Ancarig, near the south of the island.²⁹ Here,

²⁸ Croyland was one of the islands lying in that tract of the Eastern waters, which, rising from the middle of the country, and spreading above 100 miles, precipitated themselves into the sea with many great rivers. Malm. Gest. Pont. 292.

²⁹ Or Thorn-ey, the island of Thorns. There was a monastery here. Malmsbury exhibits it as the picture of a paradise; amidst the marshes abounding in trees, was a fine

BOOK with Toretus, the anchorite, and his fraternity,
 IV. they remained four days.

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THE abbot, and they who were too young or too old to fly, put on their sacred vestments, and assembled in the choir, performing their mass and singing all the Psalter with the faint hope, that unresisting age and harmless childhood would disarm ferocity of its cruelty. Soon a furious torrent of howling barbarians poured in, exulting to find Christian priests to massacre. The venerable abbot was hewed down at the altar by the cruel Oskitul, and the attendant ministers were beheaded after him. The old men and children, who ran affrighted from the choir, were seized and tortured, to discover the treasure of the place. The prior suffered in the vestry, the subprior in the refectory; every part of the sacred edifice was stained with blood. One child only, of ten years of age, whose beautiful countenance happened to interest the younger Sidroc³⁰, was permitted to survive. The spoilers broke down all the tombs and

green plain, as smooth and level as a stream; every part was cultivated; here apple-trees arose, there vines crept along the fields, or twined round poles. Yet he adds one trait so expressive of lonesomeness, as to throw a gloom over the charms of nature: "When a man comes he is applauded like an angel." *De Gest. Pont.* 294.

³⁰ One of the Sidrocs had already distinguished himself for his aggressions on France. In 852, and 855, he entered the Seine with much successful depredation. *Chron. Fontanel.* Bouquet 7. p. 40—43.

monuments, with the avaricious hope of discovering treasures; and, on the third day, they committed the superb edifice to the flames.

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WITH a great plunder of cattle, the insatiate barbarians marched the next day to Peterborough.³¹ There stood a monastery, the glory of the architecture of the age, and whose library was a large repository of books, which the anxious labours of two centuries had collected. But arts and science were toys not worthy even to amuse their women, in the estimation of these invaders. They assailed the gates and fastenings, and with their archers and machines attacked the walls. The monks resisted with all their means of annoyance. A brother of Ubbo was carried off to his tent, wounded by the blow of a stone. This incident added a new incentive to the cruel fury of the Northmen. They burst in at the second assault under Ubbo. He slew the hoary abbot, and all the monks, with his own weapon. Every other inhabitant was slaughtered without mercy by

³¹ This also stands in the land of the Girvii or Fenmen, who occupied those immense marshes, containing millions of acres, where the counties of Lincoln, Cambridge, Huntingdon, and Northampton meet. Camd. 408. The marshes are described by Hugo Candidus as furnishing wood and turf for fire, hay for cattle, reeds for thatching, and fish and water-fowl for subsistence. Peterborough monastery was in the best portion. On one side was a range of water, on the other woods and a cultivated country. It was accessible on all sides but the East, where a boat was requisite.

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his followers. One man only had a gleam of humanity. Sidroc cautioned the little boy, whom he had saved from Croyland, to keep out of the way of Ubbo. The immense booty which they were gorged with did not mitigate their love of ruin. The much admired monastery, and its valuable and scarcely reparable literary treasures, were soon wrapt in fire. For fifteen days the conflagration continued.

THE Northmen, turning to the south, advanced to Huntingdon. The two earls Sidroc were appointed to guard the rear and the baggage over the rivers. As they were passing the Nen³², after the rest of the army, two cars, laden with vast wealth and property, with all the cattle drawing them, were overturned, at the left of the stone bridge, into a depthless whirlpool. While all the attendants of the younger Sidroc were employed in recovering what was possible of the loss, the child of Croyland ran into the nearest wood, and, walking all night, he beheld the smoking ruins of his monastery at the dawn.

HE found that the monks had returned from Incarig the day before, and were laboriously toiling to extinguish the flames, which yet raged in various divisions of the monastery. When they heard from the infant the fate of their su-

³² This river runs through Northampton, making many reaches by the winding of its banks. Camden calls it a very noble river, p. 430.

perior and elder brethren, unconquerable sorrow suspended their exertions, till wearied nature compelled a remission of their grief. They collected such as they could find of the mutilated and half-consumed bodies, and buried them with sympathetic reverence. Having repaired part of the ruins, they chose another abbot; when the hermits of Incarig came to implore their charitable care for the bodies at Peterborough, which the animals of prey were violating. A deputation of monks was sent, who found the corpses, and interred them in one large grave, with the abbot at the summit. A stony pyramid covered his remains, round which were afterwards engraven their images, in memorial of the catastrophe.³³

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SPREADING devastation and murder around them as they marched, the Northmen proceeded into Cambridgeshire. Ely and its first Christian church and monastery, with the heroic nuns, who mutilated their faces to preserve their honour, were destroyed by the ruthless enemy; and many other places were desolated.

THE sanguinary invaders went afterwards into East Anglia.³⁴ The throne of this kingdom

Invasion
of East
Anglia.

³³ Ingulf, 22—24. Chron. Petrib. 18—20.

³⁴ Abbo Floriacensis, who wrote in the tenth century, describes East Anglia as nearly environed with waters; immense marshes, an hundred miles in extent, were on the north; the ocean on the east and south. On the west it was

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was occupied by Edmund, a man praised for his affability, his gentleness, and humility. He may have merited all the lavish encomiums which he has received for the milder virtues; but he was deficient in those manly energies whose vigorous activity would have met the storm in its fury, and might have disarmed it of its terrors.³⁵

INGWAR, separating from Ubbo, proceeded to the place where Edmund resided. The picture annexed to his route represents a burning country, the highways strewed with the victims of massacre, violated women, the husband expiring on his own threshold near his wife, and the infant torn from its mother's bosom, and slain before her eyes to increase her screams.³⁶ Ingwar

protected from the irruptions of the other members of the octarchy, by a mound of earth like a lofty wall. Its soil was fertile and pleasant; it was full of lakes two or three miles in space; its marshes were peopled with monks. MSS. Cott. Library. Tib. B. 2. p. 3.

³⁵ One of the fullest accounts of the fate of Edmund, is in the little book of Abbo. He addresses it to the famous Dunstan, from whom he had the particulars he narrates. He intimates that Dunstan used to repeat them with eyes moist with tears, and had learnt them from an old soldier of Edmund's, who simply and faithfully recounted them upon his oath to the illustrious Ethelstan. Abbo's treatise has been printed abroad in *Acta Sanctorum*. Cologne, vol. vi. p. 465—472. ed. 1575.

³⁶ "Maritus cum conjuge aut mortuus aut moribundus jacebat in limine; infans raptus a matris uberibus, ut major esset ejulatus, trucidabatur coram maternis obtutibus." Abbo, MSS. p. 3. This author was so well acquainted with Virgil and Horace as to cite them in his little work.

had heard a favourable account of Edward's warlike abilities, and by a rapid movement endeavoured, according to the usual plan of the Northmen³⁷, to surprise the king, before he could present an armed country to repel him. Edmund, though horrors had for some time been raging round his frontiers, was roused to no preparations; had meditated no warfare. He was dwelling quietly in a village near Hagsildun³⁸, when the active Dane appeared near him, and he was taken completely unawares.

His earl, Ulfketul, had made one effort to save East Anglia, but it failed. His army was decisively beaten at Thetford with profuse slaughter; and this calamity deeply wounded the mind of Edmund, who did not reflect, that to resist the Danes with energy, was not merely to uphold his own domination, but to protect his people from the most fatal ruin.³⁹

As Ingwar drew nigh to the royal residence, he sent one of his countrymen to the king, with a haughty command, to divide his treasures,

³⁷ Abbo remarks of the Danish nation, "*cum semper studeat rapto vivere, nunquam tamen indicta pugna palam contendit cum hoste, nisi preventa insidiis, ablata spe ad portus navium remeandi*," MSS. p. 6.

³⁸ The Hill of Eagles. It is now, says Bromton, 805, called Hoxne. It is upon the Waveney, a little river dividing part of Norfolk from Suffolk. It is not far from Diss in Suffolk. Camden names it Hoxon, p. 375.

³⁹ Ingulf, 24. Asser, 20. Matt. West. 318.

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submit to his religion, and reign in subjection to his will. "And who are you that should dare to withstand our power! The storm of the ocean deters not our proposed enterprise, but serves us instead of oars. Neither the loud roarings of the sky, nor its darting lightnings have ever injured us. Submit, then, with your subjects, to a master whom even the elements respect." ⁴⁰

ON receiving this imperious message, Edmund held counsel with one of his bishops who enjoyed his confidence. The ecclesiastic, apprehensive of the king's safety, exhorted his compliance. A dialogue ensued, in which Edmund displayed the sensibility of an amiable mind, but not those active talents which would have given safety to his people. He pitied his unhappy subjects, groaning under every evil which a barbarous enemy could inflict, and wished his death could restore them. When the bishop represented to him the ravages which the Northmen had perpetrated, and the danger which impended on himself, and advised his flight, the mild-hearted king exclaimed, "I desire not to survive my dear and faithful subjects. Why do

⁴⁰ "Et quis tu, ut tantæ potentiæ insolenter audeas contradicere? Marinæ tempestatis procella nostris servit remigiis, nec movet a preposito directæ intentionis.—Quibus nec ingens mugitus cœli, nec crebri jactus fulminum unquam nocuerunt. Esto itaque, cum tuis omnibus, sub hoc imperatore maximo cui famulantur elementa." Abbo, ib.

you suggest to me the shame of abandoning my fellow-soldiers? I have always shunned the disgrace of reproach, and especially of cowardly abandoning my knights; because I feel it nobler to die for my country than to forsake it; and shall I now be a voluntary recreant, when the loss of those I loved makes even the light of heaven tedious to me?" ⁴¹ The Danish envoy was then called in, and Edmund addressed him with an energy that ought to have anticipated such a crisis, and to have influenced his actions. "Stained as you are with the blood of my people, you deserve death; but I will imitate the example of him I venerate, and not pollute my hands with your blood. Tell your commander, I am neither terrified by his threats, nor deluded by his promises. Let his boundless cupidity, which no plunder can satiate, take and consume my treasures. You may destroy this frail and falling body, like a despised vessel; but know, that the freedom of my mind shall never, for an instant, bow before him. It is more honourable to defend our liberties with our lives than to beg mercy with our tears. Death is preferable to servility. Hence! my spirit shall fly to heaven from its prison, contaminated by no degrading submission. How can you allure me by the hope of retained power, as if I could desire a kingdom, where its popula-

⁴¹ Abbo, *ibid.*

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tion has been so destroyed; or a few subjects robbed of every thing that makes life valuable!" ⁴²

THIS passive fortitude, and these irritating reproaches only goaded the resentment of the Dane, whose rapid hostilities had now made active warfare useless. The king was taken without farther contest. He was bound with close fetters, and severely beaten. He was then dragged to a tree, tied to its trunk and lacerated with whips. Even these sufferings could not appease the tigers of the Baltic. They aimed their arrows at his body with contending dexterity. At length Ingwar, enraged at his firmness and piety, closed the cruel scene by the amputation of his head. ⁴³

THUS terminated another kingdom of the Anglo-Saxon octarchy, which, as it had been baneful to the happiness of the island by occasioning incessant warfare, was now become wholly incompatible with the security of every individual, while the states of the continent were enlarging, and the North was pouring its throngs around. By annihilating with such

⁴² This is a literal translation of his speech to the messenger of Ingwar, as given by Abbo, on the authority mentioned in note 35.

⁴³ The 20th of November was the day of his catastrophe, which was so interesting, that the Islander, Ara Frode, makes it one of the steps of his chronology, p. 7. He was canonized. His memory was much venerated, and his name still exists in our calendars.

total extirpation all the rival dynasties, and the prejudices which supported them, the Danes unconsciously made some atonement for the calamities they diffused. They harassed the Anglo-Saxons into national fraternity, and combined contending sceptres into one well-regulated monarchy.

CHAP.
VI.
870.

THE Northmen placed Godrun, one of their kings, over East-Anglia; while the brother of Edmund, terrified at the miseries of the day, fled into Dorset, and there lived an hermitical life on bread and water.⁴⁴

HAVING resolved to attempt the subjugation of the island, the Northmen governed their career with policy, as distinguished as their cruelty. They had attacked Mercia, and they beheld the banners of West Saxony waving on its frontiers. If they assaulted Wessex, would the Mercian sword be there? Their experience proved that they calculated well on the petty policy of that degraded kingdom. Although the crown of Mercia trembled in every battle in Wessex; though it was impossible for Ethelred to be conquered, and for Burrhed to be secure, yet the protecting succour which Mercia had received from the kings of Wessex, was never returned, though common danger claimed it.

INGWAR having completed the conquest of East Anglia, and permitted his associate, God-

⁴⁴ Malmsb. 250. Bromton, 807.

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run, to assume its sceptre, returned to his brother Ubbo, in Northumbria.⁴⁵ The rest of the invaders, under the command of Halfdan and Bacseg, two of their kings, or sea-kings, hastened from East Anglia to a direct invasion of Wessex.

Wessex
attacked.

THEY penetrated from Norfolk unchecked into Berkshire; they possessed themselves of Reading as soon as they reached it, and continued there many days unmolested.

ON the third day after their arrival, their leaders, with a powerful body of cavalry, spread themselves successfully to pillage; the rest dug a trench between the Thames and the Kennet, to the right of the city, to defend their encampments. Ethelwulph, the earl of the county, who had defeated the invaders before, collected the men of the vicinity, and exhorted them to disregard the superiority of the foe. His argument was a popular one: "What though their army is larger than ours, Christ, our general, is stronger than them." His countrymen were convinced by his logic; and, after a long com-

⁴⁵ Bromton, 807. Ethelwerd says of him, "Ivar died this year," p. 843. The Annals of Ulster state, that he went in this year from Scotland to Dublin with 200 ships, with great booty, and a multitude of English, Welsh, and Pictish prisoners. These annals place his death, in 872, thus: "872, Ivar, king of all the Northerns in Ireland and Britain, died," p. 65. His children, sea-kings, like himself, are often mentioned in these Irish Annals.

bat, the invaders were repulsed at ⁴⁶ Inglefield, with the loss of Sidroc the elder, the chief who had so much afflicted France.

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870.

FOUR days after this conflict, the kings of Wessex, Ethelred and Alfred, put themselves into motion, with their forces, and joining the earl Ethelwulph, attacked the Northmen at Reading. They destroyed all the enemies who were out of the citadel; but those within rushing from all its gates, a fiercer battle followed, which ended in the death of Ethelwulph, and the retreat of the West Saxons. ⁴⁷

TAKEN unawares by the invasion, the West Saxons had rushed to the conflict with a hasty and inadequate force. Four days afterwards, they collected in a more complete and formidable array, and combated the enemy at Æscedun, or the Ash-tree Hill. ⁴⁸ The Danes had accumulated all their strength, and, with an attempt at tactical arrangement, they divided themselves into two bodies; one, the chief, their two kings conducted; the other moved under the earls. The English imitated their array. Ethelred resolved himself to encounter the northern kings, and appointed Alfred to

⁴⁶ Sax. Chron. 80. Sim. Dun. 125. Asser, 21. Inglefield is a little village in the neighbourhood of Reading. Camden, 142, who, in a small mistake, calls Ethelwulph a king, instead of an earl.

⁴⁷ Sim. Dun. 125. Asser, 21.

⁴⁸ Asser, 21.

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870.

shock with their earls. Both armies raised their shields into a tortoise-arch, and demanded the battle.

THE Northmen were first in the field; for Ethelred, either impressed with that dispiriting belief, which men on the eve of great conflicts sometimes experience, that he should not survive it, or preparing his mind for the worst event, and for its better state, and desirous to obtain the favour of the Lord of all existing worlds, waited to say his prayers in his tent, which he declared he would not leave till the priest had finished. Alfred, more eager for the fray, and provoked by the defying presence of the enemy, was impatient at the delay; his indignant courage forgot the inferiority of the division which he commanded; he led up his troops in condensed order, and disdained to remark that the crafty Danes were waiting on an eminence for an advantageous conflict.⁴⁹ A solitary tree marked the place of combat, and round this the nations shocked with frightful clamour and equal bravery. The exertions of Alfred were unavailing, though he is stated to have attacked like the chafed boar; he had been too precipitate. The English ranks gave way, when the presence of Ethelred, with his battle,

⁴⁹ Asser says he had his account of Alfred's impetuous alacrity from those who saw it, 22. He adds the phrase "aprimo more."

destroyed the inequality of the combatants, and reanimated the fainting spirits of his countrymen. The long and dreadful struggle at last ended in the death of the king Bacseg, of the younger Sidroc⁵⁰, many other earls, and some thousands of the Danes, who fled in general rout. The English chased them all night and the next day over the fields of Ashdown, till they reached their fortress at ⁵¹Reading. The slaughter of the day gave it a dismal claim to memory.⁵²

⁵⁰ Asser and the printed copy of the Saxon Chronicle place the deaths of both the Sidrocs in this battle, although it had recorded the fall of one in the preceding battle. The fine MS. of the Saxon Chronicle in the Cotton Library, Tib. B. 4. p. 30., having mentioned the death of one Sidroc at Inglefield, refers the death of the younger Sidroc only to this battle: "and thep Sidpac re geonga, and Orbeapn eopl, and Fpæna eopl, and Hapalð eopl." This MS. though in some respects less complete than those which Dr. Gibson edited, is yet more accurate in others. It is remarkably well written, and seems very ancient.

⁵¹ Asser, 23, 24. Flor. Wig. 307. Sax. Chron. 81.

⁵² The place of this great battle has been controverted. Aston, near Wallingford, in Berks, has good claims, because the Saxon Chronicle (as its editor observed) mentions *Æscedun*, on another occasion, as close by Wallingford, p. 135. Dr. Wise, in his letter to Dr. Mead, concerning some antiquities in Berkshire, printed 1738, contends that the famous white horse on the hill was made to commemorate this victory. He says, "I take *Escesdune* to mean that ridge of hills from Letcombe and thereabouts, going on to Wiltshire, and overlooking the vale with the towns in it. The town formerly called *Ayshesdown*, is now called *Ashbury*; the old name is still preserved hereabouts, the Downs being called

BOOK
IV.

870.

FOURTEEN days after this, the Danes collected strength sufficient to defeat the kings of Wessex at Basing.⁵³ An important accession of allies, newly arrived from the North⁵⁴, increased the terrors of this defeat, and augured new miseries to the Anglo-Saxons.

Ethelred
dies.

THE last invaders joined harmoniously with the preceding, because their object was the same. Within two months afterwards, the princes of Wessex supported another battle with the recruited confederates at⁵⁵ Merton; but the conflict, after many changes of victory, was again unfortunate to the English. Ethelred received a wound in it, of which he died soon after Easter, and was interred at Wimburn.⁵⁶

by the shepherds, Ashdown; and about a mile southward from Ashbury, is Ashdown Park, p. 20. Whitaker prefers the locality of Aston, p. 272.

⁵³ Asser, 24.

⁵⁴ Quo prælio peracto, de ultramarinis partibus alius paganorum exercitus societati se adjunxit. Asser, 24.

⁵⁵ Sax. Chron. 81. This position of Meretune is doubtful. Merton in Surrey, Merden, in Wilts, and Merton in Oxfordshire, have been suggested. I am induced to venture a new opinion, that it was Morton in Berks, because the Chronicle of Mailros, 144, places the battle at Reading; and, according to the map, Morton hundred joins Reading, and contains both North Merton and South Merton.

⁵⁶ Bromton, 809. The bishop of Sherborne fell in this battle. Mat. West. 323. The Saxon Chronicle says, that he and many goþpa menna fell in it, 81, whom Huntingdon calls multi procures Angliæ, p. 349. Ethelwerd, the chronicler in mentioning Ethelred's death, styles the king his atavus, p. 843.

CHAP. VII.

The Reign of ALFRED, from his Accession to his Retirement.

THE death of Ethelred raised Alfred to the throne of Wessex. Some children of his elder brother were alive¹, but the crisis was too perilous for the nation to have suffered the sceptre to be feebly wielded by a juvenile hand. The dangers which environed the country, excited the earls and chiefs of the whole nation, whom we may understand to have been the witenagemot, with the unanimous approbation of the country², to choose Alfred for the successor, that they might have a prince who could give them the protection of his abilities.

CHAP.
VII.871.
Alfred
accedes.

It is intimated that he hesitated³; and indeed, every evil which can abate human happiness,

¹ Alfred in his will gave eight manors to Æthelm, his brother's son, and three manors to Athelwold, his brother's son. He also gave some manors to his cousin Osferth. The end of Athelwold will be seen in Edward's reign.

² Sim. Dun. 126, 127. Asser, 24.

³ Asser's expression is, that he began to reign quasi invitus, as if unwillingly, because he thought that unless he was supported by the divine assistance, he could not resist such enemies. Vita Alfredi, p. 24.

BOOK

IV.

871.

seemed to surround the diadem offered to Alfred. It was the defeat and death of a brother which occasioned his accession. The victorious enemies, stronger from their victory, promised to be more formidable to Alfred than to Ethelred. All the causes that had produced their former successes were yet in full operation, while the new sovereign's means of resisting them were not increased. According to the natural course of things his reign could not but be calamitous. Alfred chose to endure the threatening contingencies, and by accepting the throne, began a life of severe military labour, of continual difficulty, and of great mental anxiety, shaded for some time with the deepest gloom of misfortune and personal degradation.

THE fiercest and most destructive succession of conflicts which ever saddened a year of human existence, distinguished that of Alfred's accession with peculiar misery. With their own population, the West Saxons maintained eight pitched battles against the Northmen, besides innumerable skirmishes by day and night, with which the nobles and royal officers endeavoured to check their depredations. Many thousands of the invaders fell, but new fleets of adventurers were perpetually shading the German Ocean with their armaments, who supplied the havoc caused by the West Saxon ⁴swords.

* Asser, 25. Flor. Wig. 311. Hoveden, 417. The year 871 is noted as the beginning of Alfred's reign by Asser, the

It was now become a conflict between the Northman nations and the Anglo-Saxons, for the conquest and occupation of England, like that of their own ancestors against the Britons, and of these against the Romans. The northman mind had taken a full direction to a forcible settlement in England. It was no longer battles for transient plunder or personal fame. It was for lasting dominion; for the land-inheritance of the country; and for the property and liberty of every individual who possessed any.

CHAP.
VII.
871.

WITHIN a month after Alfred's accession, the Danes attacked his troops at Wilton⁵, in his absence, with such superiority of force, that all the valour of patriotism could not prevent defeat. This made the ninth great battle which had been fought this year in West Saxony, besides the excursions which Alfred and several of the ealdormen and the king's thægns made against the enemy, which were not numbered. Wearied himself, and the country being exhausted by these depopulating conflicts, Alfred made a

Alfred's
defeat, and
first peace.

Saxon Chronicle, Mailros, Hoveden, Sim. Dun., and some others. But Ingulf, 25., Malmsb. 42., and Petrib. 21., place his accession in 872.

⁵ Bromton, 809., in a mistake, puts down Walton in Sussex. But Asser, whom the other chronicles follow, says, Wilton is on the north bank of the river Guilou, from which the whole country is named, p. 25. Guilou means the meandering river.

BOOK
IV.871.
Northmen
conquer
Mercia;

peace with his enemies, and they quitted his dominions.⁶

874.

YET a peace, with their continuance in the island, could but be a dangerous truce, that would soon end in more dangerous hostilities; and which, in the mean time, surrendered the rest of England into their power. This soon became visible; for the invaders marched immediately, even those who were in Northumberland, to London, and, wintering there, threatened Mercia. Burrhed, its king, twice negotiated with them; but at last, disregarding all treaties, they entered Mercia, and wintered at Repton in Derbyshire, where they destroyed the celebrated monastery, the sacred mausoleum of all the Mercian kings.⁷ Burrhed quitted his throne, and, leaving his people to the mercy of the invaders, went disgracefully to Rome, where he soon died, and was buried in the English school.⁸

⁶ Sax. Ch. 82. Asser. 25. Ethelw. 844. It would seem that Ingwar went to Scotland and Ireland after his conquest of East Anglia; for he is noticed in the Annals of Ulster, as besieging and destroying Alcuith at Dunbarton, and proceeding afterwards to Ireland with a multitude of English, Welsh, and Pictish prisoners. In 872 he is mentioned to have died in Ireland. These Annals style him king of all the Northmen in Ireland and Britain, p. 65.

⁷ Monasterium que celeberrimum omnium regum Merciorum sacratissimum mausoleum funditus destruxissent. Ingulf, 26.

⁸ In the church of St. Mary there. Asser, 26. Ingulf,

THE Danes gave the Mercian crown to Ceolwulf, an officer of Burrhed's court: his capacity was contracted; his disposition mischievous; he swore fidelity to his foreign masters; paid them tribute, and promised to return the power they granted, whenever they required, and to be ready with his forces to co-operate with them. He plundered the poor peasantry, robbed the merchants, and oppressed the unprotected and the clergy; on the wretched monks of the destroyed abbey of Croyland he barbarously imposed a tax of a thousand pounds. But this pageant of tyranny displeased his masters; he was stripped of every thing, and he perished miserably.⁹ With him ended for ever the Anglo-Saxon octarchy. The kingdom of Mercia never existed again. When the Danish power declined, it was associated by Alfred to Wessex¹⁰, from which it was never separated again.

ENGLAND was now become divided between two powers, the West Saxons; and the Northmen, who had subdued all the island but Wessex.

who in general is a very valuable authority, here makes a small confusion of dates; he says, Burrhed fled in 874, while Alfred was tarrying in Etheling island. This is not correct. Alfred did not seclude himself till four years afterwards.

⁹ Ingulf, 27.

¹⁰ Ingulf, 27. He says, that from the first year of Penda, to the deposition of Ceolwulf, the Mercian throne had lasted about 230 years.

BOOK
IV.

874.

and Bernicia.

THE invaders divided themselves into two bodies. The largest part of their army, under their three kings, Godrun, Oskitul, and Amund, marched from Repton to Cambridge, where they wintered and resided twelve ¹¹ months; while another division of their forces proceeded to Northumbria under Halfdan, to complete the conquest of this kingdom. As yet they had subdued no more of it than Deira. His calamitous invasion subjected the whole kingdom of Northumbria, and harassed the Strathclyd Britons.¹² Scotland attempted to withstand them, but failed; and the king of Wales fled to Ireland for refuge from their attacks.¹³ Halfdan, having completed the conquest of Bernicia, divided it amongst his followers, and tilled and cultivated it. He perished soon afterwards in Ireland.¹⁴

876.

They attack Alfred. His second peace.

THE three kings, who had wintered at Cambridge, began their hostilities against Wessex. Leaving their positions at night, they sailed to Dorsetshire, surprised the castle of Wareham,

¹¹ Ethelwerd, 844. Asser, 27.

¹² Sax. Chron. 83.

¹³ Ann. Ulster, 65. These annals notice some dissensions of the Northmen, in which Halfdan killed by stratagem the son of Olaf, one of the kings or sea-kings that accompanied Ingwar.

¹⁴ Sax. Chron. 84. In 876, the Annals of Ulster place the death of Halfdan. "Battle at Lochraun, between the Fin-gâls and Dubh-gâls, where the latter lost Halfdan their captain," p. 65.

and depopulated the country round. Alfred, after a naval victory, weary of battles and seeking only repose, again negotiated with them to leave his dominions; and he had the impolicy to use money as his peace-maker.¹⁵ They pledged themselves by their bracelets, the oath most sacred to their feelings, and which they had never plighted before.¹⁶ But Alfred exacted also an oath on Christian relics. We may smile at the logic of the king, who thought that a Christian oath would impose a stronger obligation on Pagan minds, or that the crime of perjury was aggravated by the formalities of the adjuration. But the delusion of his mind in not discerning that the welfare of himself and his country was sacrificed by such treaties is more remarkable; especially as Asser mentions that his natural character was to be too warlike.¹⁷

To punish Northmen by the impositions of oaths, or by hostages, which appear to have been reciprocal¹⁸, was to encourage their de-

¹⁵ Ethelwerd, 844. Before this treaty Alfred attacked the Danes by sea. His ships, meeting six of theirs, took one and dispersed the others. Asser, 27.

¹⁶ Asser, 28. Their bracelets were highly valued by them, and always buried with them. See Bartholin. 499—503. Joannes Tinmuth says, they were nobilitatis indicium. Hist. MSS. cited by Dugdale, i. p. 256.; and see Aimon, p. 371. 385.

¹⁷ "Nimium bellicosus," p. 24.

¹⁸ I infer this, because, in mentioning Alfred's complete and final conquest of Guthrun, Asser says, he exacted host-

BOOK
IV.

876.

predations by the impunity which attended them. It was binding a giant with a rush, an eagle with a cobweb. Accordingly, in a night quickly succeeding the peacemaking solemnity, they rushed clandestinely on the king's forces, and slew all his horsemen.¹⁹ They used the steeds to mount a part of their army, which rode immediately to Exeter, and remained there for the winter.²⁰

877.
Alfred's
naval suc-
cesses.

THE small advantage which the ships of Alfred had obtained over a few Danish vessels, induced him to cause long ships and galleys to be built at the ports of his kingdom; and, as his countrymen were less competent to navigate them, he manned them with such piratical foreigners as would engage in his service.²¹ They were appointed to cut off all supplies from his invaders. They met a large fleet of Northmen hastening from Wareham, to relieve their countrymen. They flew to arms with the same alacrity with which they prosecuted all their enterprises. The Northmen, half ruined already by a stormy

ages, but gave none. *Ille nullum eis daret, p. 34.* He adds that this was unusual. *Ita tamen qualiter nunquam cum aliquo pacem ante pepigerant.*

¹⁹ Asser, 28.

²⁰ Named by the Britons, *Caer Wisc*; by the Saxons, *Eaxanceartpe*. It is, continues Asser, on the eastern bank of the river *Wisc*, near the southern sea, which flows between Gaul and Britain.

²¹ Asser's expressions are "*Impositis que piratis in illis vias maris custodiendas commisit.*" p. 29.

voyage, waged a fruitless battle; their hosts perished, and of their steeds of the ocean, to adopt their favourite metaphor, one hundred and twenty were destroyed at the rock of Swanwick, on the coast of Hampshire.²²

CHAP.
VII.
877.

ALFRED at last collected his troops, and marched against the Danes in Exeter; but they possessed themselves of the castle before he reached it, and his military skill was unable or unwilling to assault or to besiege it. He contented himself with repeating the illusory policy of exacting new hostages and new oaths, that they should depart from his kingdom.²³

THE conduct of Alfred, in the first years of his reign, seems to have been imprudent. While acting with his brother, he was energetic and indefatigable; but after he became possessed of the crown himself, instead of a system of vigilance and vigour against his enemies, we find nothing but inert quietude, temporising pacifications, and transient armaments. The only plan discernible in the first seven years of his reign, was to gain momentary repose. An interval of tranquillity was certainly obtained; but it was a delusive slumber on the precipice of fate.

²² The printed copy of Asser, besides this defeat, makes 120 also to perish in a storm. I follow Matt. West. 328. who consolidates the two incidents into one. Flor. Wig. 315., Sax. Ch. 83., Ethelw. 845., and Hunt. 350., mention only one loss of 120 vessels.

²³ Asser, 28.

CHAP. VIII.

ALFRED becomes a Fugitive. — Misconduct imputed to him.

BOOK
IV.

878.
Northmen
enter
Wilts.

WE now approach the period of Alfred's greatest degradation. The locusts of the Baltic, to use the expressive metaphor of the chronicles, having spread themselves over part of Mercia in the preceding August, and being joined by new swarms, advanced again into Wessex; and in January took possession of Chippenham in Wiltshire, where they passed the winter, and from which they made excursive ravages over the adjacent country. On this decisive invasion, the country found itself so unprotected, from whatever cause, that many of the inhabitants emigrated in penury and terror to other regions. Some fled over sea, and to France; the rest, overawed by the cavalry of the invaders, submitted to their dominion, and Alfred himself was compelled to become a fugitive.¹

Alfred's
flight.

THESE circumstances, which every chronicle states or implies, are so extraordinary, that it is

¹ Asser, 30. Sax. Chron. 84. Ethelw. 845. Matt. West. 329. Hunt. 350. Asserii Annales, 166. Alur. Bev. 105. Walling. 537. and others.

difficult to comprehend them. The Danes invade Wessex, the country falls undefended into their hands, and Alfred preserves his life by such a concealment, that his friends were as ignorant as his enemies both of his residence and fate.² Such became his distress, that he knew not where to turn³; such was his poverty, that he had even no subsistence but that which by furtive or open plunder he could extort, not merely from the Danes, but even from those of his subjects who submitted to their government; or by fishing and hunting obtain.⁴ He wandered about in woods and marshes in the greatest penury, with a few companions; sometimes, for greater secresy, alone.⁵ He had neither territory, nor, for a time, the hope of regaining⁶ any.

CHAP.
VIII.
878.

To find Alfred and the country in this distress, and at the same time to remark, that no battles are mentioned to have occurred between the arrival of the Northmen at Chippenham, and

² Quare ergo idem sæpedictus Ælfredus in tantam miseriam sæpius incidit ut nemo subjectorum suorum sciret, ubi esset vel quo devenisset. Asser, 32. So Asserii Annales, 166. So Flor. Wig.

³ At rex Ælfredus tactus dolore cordis intrinsecus, quid ageret, quo se verteret ignorabat. Matt. West. 329.

⁴ Nihil enim habebat quo uteretur, nisi quod a paganis et etiam a Christianis qui se paganorum subdiderant dominio, frequentibus irruptionibus aut clam, aut etiam palam subtraheret. Asser, 30. Flor. Wig.

⁵ Asser, 30. Hunt. 350. Mailros, 144. Chron. Sax. 84. Matt. West. 329. Sim. Dun. 18. 71.

⁶ Alur. Bev. 105.

BOOK the flight of the king, or the subjection of the
 IV. country, are circumstances peculiarly perplex-
 878. ing. It is not stated on this invasion, as it is
 on every other, that Alfred collected an army,
 and resisted the Northmen; that he retired at
 the head of his forces, though defeated; that he
 posted himself in any fortress⁷, or that he took
 any measures to defend the country against its
 enemies. They invade in January; between
 that month and the following Easter, a very
 short period, all this disaster occurred.

THE power of the Danes may have been
 formidable, but it had never been found by
 Alfred to be irresistible; and the events of a
 few months proved that it was easily assailable.
 When they attacked his brother, they met a
 resistance which has been recorded. When they
 attacked himself in the preceding years, his
 means of opposition, though not vigorous, are
 yet noticed. But on this invasion, a most re-
 markable silence occurs as to any measures of
 defence. As far as we can penetrate into such
 an obscured incident, we can discern none;
 nothing appears but panic and disaffection in
 the people; inactivity and distress in the king.

To suppose that the Northmen surprised him
 by a rapid movement into Wessex is no dimi-

⁷ This was remarkable, because Odun's defence in Kyn-
 with, and Alfred's subsequent fortification in Ethelingey,
 show how such a retreat would have protected the country.
 Hoveden says, that his ministers retired to Kynwith, p. 417.

nution of the difficulty, because they had been eight years in the island, moving about as they pleased ; and often with celerity, for the purpose of easier victory. Rapidity of motion was, indeed, a part of their usual tactics, both in England and in France ; and not to have prepared against an event that was always possible, and always impending over him, impeaches both the judgment and patriotism of the king at this period of peril.

C H A P.

VIII.

878.

BEFORE Alfred, from a respected sovereign, would have become a miserable fugitive, we should expect to read of many previous battles ; of much patriotic exertion corresponding with his character and dignity, and the duties of his station ; and worthy of his intellect. If defeated in one county, we should look for him in another ; always with an army, or in a fortress ; always withstanding the fierce enemies who assaulted him.

WHAT overwhelmed Alfred with such distress? What drove him so easily from his throne? It could not be, as Sir John Spelman intimates, that the Saxons “ were before quite spent and done,” because it is not true, that in 876 they fought “ seven desperate battles.”⁸ These battles have been placed in this year hitherto erroneously. On comparing every reputable chronicler with Asser, the friend of the king, we find them to have occurred in the last year of Ethelred’s

Its cause investigated.

⁸ See his plain but learned and useful life of Alfred, p. 53. and 50. Hume has copied his misconception.

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reign, and the first of Alfred's. Since that period, though the king sometimes headed armies, no sanguinary conflict is mentioned to have ensued in Wessex. Seven years had now elapsed without one important struggle; the strength of West Saxony was therefore unimpaired, because one-third of the juvenile population, at Alfred's accession, would, in 878, have attained the age of courageous manhood.

THAT the arrival of new supplies from the Baltic, could not have "broken the spirits of the Saxons" so suddenly, and have "reduced them to despair," is probable, because the West Saxons had not, for the last seven years, "undergone a miserable havock in their persons and property," and had exerted no "vigorous actions in their own defence." So far from being reduced to the necessity of despair, we shall find that a single summons from their king, when he had recovered his self-possession, and resolved to be the heroic patriot, was sufficient to bring them eagerly into the field, though the undisputed occupation of the country for some months must have rendered the collection of an adequate force more difficult, and its hostilities far less availing than before. The king is not stated to have troubled them with exhortations, to defend "their prince, their country, and their liberties," before he retired. And

it is remarkable, that the foes whom he had left at Chippenham, he found near Westbury, when he made the effort which produced his restoration. Amid all the confusion, emigration, and dismay, which his seclusion must have produced, twenty miles composed the extent of their intermediate progress. The invaders, whose conquests, when unresisted, were so circumscribed, and whose triumphs were afterwards destroyed by one well-directed effort, could not have exhibited that gigantic port, which intimidates strength into imbecility, and ensures destruction, by annihilating the spirit that might avert it.

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To understand this obscure incident, it is necessary to notice some charges of misconduct which have been made against Alfred. The improprieties alluded to, are declared to have had political consequences, and have been connected with his mysterious seclusion. It may be most impartial to review the traditional imputations in all their extent, and then to consider, from the confessions of Asser, how much it is reasonable to believe, or to reject.¹⁰

Misconduct imputed to Alfred.

¹⁰ It would be absurd for me to offer any apology for having ventured to be the first writer in our history that has called the public attention to the faults of Alfred, whose life had been made one continued stream of panegyric. History is only valuable in proportion to its truth, and it is no injustice to any great characters to remark, with due candour, those imperfections which they allowed themselves to commit. Yet Dr. Whitaker accuses of falsehood those who state that Alfred had any defects. A few strokes of his pen demolish authorities as easily as he sometimes unduly stretches them. See his *St. Neot*, p. 141.

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AN ancient life of Saint Neot, a kinsman of Alfred, exists in Saxon ¹¹, which alludes, though vaguely, to some impropriety in the king's conduct. It says, that Neot chided him with many words, and spoke to him prophetically: "O king, much shalt thou suffer in this life; hereafter so much distress thou shalt abide, that no man's tongue may say it all. Now, loved child, hear me if thou wilt, and turn thy heart to my counsel. Depart entirely from thine unrighteousness, and thy sins with alms redeem, and with tears abolish."¹²

ANOTHER ancient MS. life of Saint Neot ¹³ is

¹¹ It is in MS. in the Cotton Library, Vespasian, D. 14. intituled, "Vita Sancti Neoti Saxonice." It follows an account of Furseus, an East Anglian Saint, and some religious essays of Elfric, all in Saxon. As Elfric wrote the lives of many Saints in Saxon, it is most probably his composition.

¹² After mentioning that Alfred came to Neot, emb hƿ ƿaple theapfe, it adds, he hine eac theapeðe manega ƿopðen, and him to cƿ' mið ƿope ƿitegunge. "Eala thu king, mýcel ƿcealt thu tholigen on thýſſen life, on than topeapðen time ƿƿa micle anſgunnýſſe thu gebiden ƿcealt tha nan mænniſc tunge hit eall aſcegen ne mæiz. Nu leof beapn gehop me zýf thu ƿýlt and thine heorte to mine ƿebe zeceƿpe. Gepit eallnize ƿƿam thinpa unpichtƿiſnýſſe, and thine ſynnen mið ælmeſſen aleſ et mið teapen ađizole." MSS. Vesp. p. 145. From Asser's expressions, (ut in Vita Sancti patris Neoti legitur,) p. 30., it seems that a life of Neot had been written before Asser died. The Saxon life above quoted seems to be an epitome of some more ancient one. In this manner Elfric epitomised Abbo's life. See MSS. Julius, E. 7.

¹³ This is a MS. in the Cotton Library, Claudius, A. 5. It is in Latin, and is intituled, "Vita Sancti Neoti per Will. Abbatem Croylandensem, an. 1180."

somewhat stronger in its expressions of reproach. C H A P.
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 It states, "that Neot, reproving his bad actions, commanded him to amend; that Alfred, not having wholly followed the rule of reigning justly, pursued the way of depravity¹⁴: that one day when the king came, Neot sharply reproached him for the wickedness of his tyranny, and the proud austerity of his government." It declares that Neot foresaw and foretold his misfortunes. "Why do you glory in your misconduct? Why are you powerful but in iniquity; you have been exalted, but you shall not continue; you shall be bruised like the ears of wheat; where then will be your pride? If that is not yet excluded from you, it soon shall be. You shall be deprived of that very sovereignty, of whose vain splendour you are so extravagantly arrogant."¹⁵

It is in full conformity with these two lives

¹⁴ *Pravos etiam ejus redarguens actus jussit in melius converti — nondum ad plenum recte regnandi normam assecutus, viam deserverat pravitatis. Claud. MS. 154.*

¹⁵ *Quadam denique die solemni venientem ex more de tirannidis improbitate et de superba regiminis austeritate acriter eum increpavit Neotus. — Apponebat ei sanctum David — regum mansuetissimum et omnibus humilitatis exemplar — afferebat et Saulem superbia reprobatum. — Spiritus attactus prophetico, futura ei prædixit infortunia. "Quid gloriaris," inquit, "in malitia? Quid potens es in iniquitate, elevatus es ad modicum et non subsistes et sicut summitates spicarum conteris. Ubi est gloriatio tua? at si nondum exclusa est, aliquando tamen excludetur. Ipso enim regiminis principatu cujus inani gloriatione te ipsum excedendo superbis, in proximo privaberis, &c." MS. Claud. p. 154.*

BOOK of Neot that those others written by Ramsay in
IV. the twelfth century ¹⁶, express also inculpations
 878. of Alfred. The life composed in prose states
 that Neot chided him severely for his iniquitous
 conduct. "You shall be deprived of that king-
 dom in which you are swelling; in which you are
 so violently exercising an immoderate tyranny.
 But if you withdraw yourself from your cruel
 vices and inordinate passions, you shall find
 mercy."¹⁷

THE same author's biography, in Latin verse,
 reproaches the king's conduct as "dissolute,
 cruel, proud, and severe." It adds, that the
 king promised to correct himself, but did not;
 but only added to his misdeeds, and became
 worse. That Neot again reproved him for
 "wandering in depraved manners," and an-
 nounced his impending calamities.¹⁸

THE same ideas are repeated in the four-
 teenth century by Matthew of Westminster in
 his history, in phrases like those of ¹⁹ Ramsay;
 and John of Tinmouth, about the same period,

¹⁶ Dr. Whitaker has printed these from two MSS. at
 Oxford, one at the Bodleian, the other in Magdalen College,
 in the Appendix to his *St. Neot*. He thought them the
 oldest lives of *St. Neot* now known. The two which I have
 already quoted are, however, more ancient, especially the
 Saxon, which preceded the Norman conquest.

¹⁷ *Whit. App.* p. 347.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 348.

¹⁹ See *Matt. West.* p. 330. From the correspondence of
 his words he must have had Ramsay's prose life before him
 when he wrote.

reiterates the charge in the language of the Claudius MS.²⁰ Another writer of a chronicle, Wallingford, asserts that Alfred, in the beginning of his reign, indulged in luxury and vice; and that the amendment of his conduct was a consequence of his adversity.²¹

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WITH these statements from later authorities in our recollection, let us turn to the contemporary evidence of Asser, the confidential friend as well as the biographer of Alfred, and who declares so repeatedly in his history that he wrote from the information of living eye-witnesses. He loved his royal master, and we cannot read his artless biography of him without perceiving that it is not likely he would have overstated his faults, or have even mentioned them, if they had not been then too well known to have been omitted by an honest writer.

Two words used by Asser are sufficient to remove all doubt on the existence of some great faults in Alfred, in the first part of his reign; and his continuing expressions will assist us in comprehending what they were. Asser says,

²⁰ From the very damaged MS. of Tinmouth's history in the British Museum, Tiberius, b. 1., Dr. Whitaker has printed the part which relates to St. Neot. App. 366. There is a fine complete MS. of Tinmouth in the Lambeth library, which I have inspected. As I have found, on comparing them, Matthew of Westminster to have copied Ramsay, so I perceive Tinmouth has extracted passages from the older life which I have quoted in notes 14 and 15.

²¹ Wallingford, Chron. 3 Gale, p. 535, 536.

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“ We believe that this adversity occurred to the king NOT UNDESERVEDLY.”²² This emphatic admission is followed by these sentences :—

“ Because, in the first part of his reign, when he was a young man, and governed by a youthful mind ; when the men of his kingdom and his subjects came to him and besought his aid in their necessities ; when they who were depressed by the powerful, implored his aid and patronage ; he would not hear them, nor afford them any assistance, but treated them as of no estimation.”²³

ASSER continues to state, that “ Saint Neot, who was then living, his relation, deeply lamented this, and foretold that the greatest adversity would befall him. But Alfred paid no attention to his admonitions, and treated the prediction with disdain.”²⁴

²² Quam siquidem adversitatem præfato regi illatum *non immerito* ei evenisse credimus. Asser, p. 31.

²³ Quia in primo tempore regni sui, cum adhuc juvenis erat, animo que juvenili detentus fuerat, homines sui regni sibi que subjecti, qui ad eum venerant, et pro necessitatibus suis eum requisierant, et qui depressi potestatibus erant, suum auxilium ac patrocinium implorabant ; ille vero *noluit eos audire*, nec aliquod auxilium impendebat, sed *omnino eos nihili pendebat*, p. 31.

²⁴ Quod beatissimus vir Neotus adhuc vivens in carne qui erat cognatus suus intime corde doluit ; maximamque adversitatem ab hoc ei venturam spiritu prophetico plenus prædixerat. Sed ille et piissimam viri Dei correptionem parvi pendebat et verissimam ejus prophetiam non recipiebat. Asser, 32.

THE guarded expressions of the bishop, writing to his living sovereign, whom he highly venerated, prevent us from deciphering more clearly the exact nature of Alfred's offence. As far as he goes, however, he gives some confirmation to the traditions which have been quoted. He confesses some misconduct in the discharge of the king's royal functions. And, as he adds, that Alfred's punishment was so severe in this world, that his insipientia, his folly, might not be chastised hereafter²⁵, we may presume that the fault was of magnitude, though he has not more clearly explained it.

THE prophetic spirit of Neot could be nothing but his sagacity. The king's neglect of the complaints and sufferings of his subjects, may have made him unpopular, and Neot may have foreseen the calamities which would result from the displeasure of the people. The activity and power of the Danes could not be resisted with success, without the highest zeal and alacrity of the Saxon people. But if Alfred, by treating their grievances with contempt, had alienated their affections, the strongest fortress of his throne was sapped.

IN considering this subject, we must, in justice

The probable
cause.

²⁵ Quia igitur quicquid ab homine peccatur aut hic aut in futuro necesse est ut quolibet modo puniatur; noluit verus et pius iudex illam regis insipientiam esse impunitam in hoc seculo quatenus illi parceret in districto iudicio. Asser, 32.

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to Alfred, remember, that all his errors were confined to the first part of his reign, and were nobly amended. It is also fair to state, that the imputed neglect of his people must not be hastily attributed to a tyrannical disposition, because it may be referred to circumstances which better suit his authentic character. It may have arisen from the intellectual disparity between himself and his people. When men begin to acquire knowledge, they sometimes encourage a haughty self-opinion, a craving fondness for their favourite pursuit, and an irritable impatience of every interruption. This hurtful temper, which disappears as the judgment matures, may have accompanied Alfred's first acquisitions of knowledge; and such feelings could only be exasperated, when the duties of his office called him from his studies and meditations into a world of barbarians, who despised books and bookmen, with whom his mind could have no point of contact, whose ignorance provoked his contempt, and whose habits, perhaps, excited his abhorrence. Beginning to meditate, in his private hours, on the illustrious ancients whom he had heard of, his mind aspired to be assimilated to theirs, and could only loath the rude, martial, and ignorant savages who filled his court, claimed his time, and oppressed his kingdom. Dependant and noble were alike fierce, uninstructed, and gross. How could his

emerging mind compare the exalted characters and depicted civilisation of Greece and Rome, or the sweet and interesting virtues inculcated by Christianity, without an indignation, impatience, and misanthropy which call for our compassion rather than our reproach! How could he have imbibed an ardent intellectual taste, and have thereby possessed the increasing love of the great, the beautiful, and the good, without being affected by the melancholy contrast between his studies and his experience! Every one who has struggled into taste and knowledge amid the impediments of uncongenial connections and occupations, will have felt, in his own experience, something of that temper of mind which, in circumstances somewhat analogous, seems at first to have actuated Alfred.

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ASSER connects with the hints about his faults, an intimation, that in this important crisis of his life, he suffered from the disaffection of his subjects. It is expressed obscurely, but the words are of strong import. He says, "the Lord permitted him to be very often wearied by his enemies, afflicted by adversity, and to be depressed *by the contempt of his people.*"²⁶ He

Alfred deserted by his subjects.

²⁶ Verum etiam ab hostibus fatigari, adversitatibus affligi, *despectu suorum deprimi*, multotiens eum idem benignus dominus permisit, p. 31.

BOOK adds to these phrases, the paragraphs already
 IV. quoted about his faults, and ends the subject by
 878. declaring, “*Wherefore* he fell often into such
 misery, that none of his subjects knew where
 he was, or what had befallen him.”²⁷

ASSER had already declared, that on the invasion of Godrun, many fled into exile; and that “for the greatest part, all the inhabitants of that region submitted to his²⁸ dominion.” The inference which seems naturally to result from all his passages is, that Alfred had offended his people, and in this trying emergency was deserted by them. Other authors also declare, that it was their flight or disaffection which produced his.²⁹

²⁷ Quare ergo idem sæpedictus Ælfredus in tantam miseriam sæpius incidit, ut nemo subjectorum suorum sciret, ubi esset vel quo devenisset, p. 32.

²⁸ Asser, p. 30.

²⁹ The chronicle of Mailros says, that Alfred *fugientibus suis* cum paucis relictus est et in nemoribus se abscondebat, p. 144. Wallingford says, Rex vero Ealfredus elegit prophetiæ spiritui cedere quam cum *certo suorum dissidio* sævientibus occurrere. Ingulf declares, that ad tantam tandem exilitatem deductus est ut tribus pagis Hamtoniensi, Wiltoniensi, et Somersata *ægre in fide* retentis, p. 26. So Malmsbury, p. 43.

The Latin life of Saint Neot says, Rex autem Aluredus audiens barbaricam rabiem atque sævitiam cominus irruisse *suorumque considerans dispersionem* huc illucque cœpit animo fluctuare. MSS. Claud. 157. The expression of Asser, in note 32. of *Sæpius*, would lead us to infer that Alfred had been in great difficulties *before* this last distress.

A FEW other remarks on this subject may be perused in the accompanying note.³⁰

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³⁰ We have endeavoured to account for the neglect of his subjects mentioned by Asser; but he is also charged with cruelty and severity, and with immoral conduct, in the ancient lives of St. Neot.

On the last imputation we may observe, that Alfred in his youth felt himself subject to tendencies which induced him to implore from Heaven some disciplining visitation to repress them, that would not make him useless or contemptible among his contemporaries. Asser, p. 41. The accusation of cruelty and severity is more remarkable. On this we may recollect some of his judicial punishments which are mentioned in the old law-book called the "Mirroir des Justices," writtten by Andrew Horne in the reign of Edward the Second. He quotes, in this work, Rolls in the time of king Alfred; and, among many other inflictions of the king's love of justice, he mentions several executions which appear to have been both summary and arbitrary, and, according to our present notions, cruelly severe. It is true that the minds and habits of every part of society were in those times so violent, that our estimation of the propriety of these judicial severities cannot now be accurately just. But yet, even with this recollection, the capital punishments with which Alfred is stated to have visited the judicial errors, corruptions, incapacity, dishonesty, and violence, which are recorded in the Mirror, strike our moral feeling as coming within the expressions of the "immoderate tyranny" which he is said to have at first exhibited.

That Alfred should desire the improvement of his people, was the natural result of his own improving mind. But if he at first attempted to effect this by violence, and to precipitate by pitiless exertions of power, that melioration which time, and adapted education, laws, example, and institutions only could produce, he acted with as much real tyranny as if he had shed their blood from the common passions of an ordinary despot.

No motive can make crime not criminal. However men may palter with the question to serve temporary purposes, no

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end justifies bad means. Cruelty and violence are always evils, and tend to produce greater ones than those which they correct. We may, therefore, understand from the examples mentioned by Horne, that even Alfred's better purposes, thus executed, may have attached to the beginning of his reign the charges of tyranny and cruelty, and may have produced the temporary aversion of his people. They could not appreciate his great objects. They saw what they hated. They probably misconceived, for a time, his real character, and by their alienation may have contributed to amend it.

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His Conduct during his Seclusion.

LET us now collect all that the most ancient writers have transmitted to us of this afflictive crisis of Alfred's life. Their statements present us with all that was known or believed on this subject, by our ancestors who lived nearest to the times of our venerable king; and they are too interesting not to merit our careful preservation.

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THE period of Alfred's humiliation may be divided into four stages. 1st. What occurred between his leaving his throne and his reaching Athelney: 2d. The incidents which happened to him there before he began his active measures against the invaders: 3d. His exertions until he discovered himself again to his subjects: and 4th. The great battle which restored him to his kingdom. On each of these heads we will lay before the reader the circumstances which the best and most ancient authorities that we could explore have transmitted to us.

ON the first stage, the oldest authority that now remains is the Saxon life of St. Neot, written before the Conquest. He says of the

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king, that when the army approached “ he was soon lost ; he took flight, and left all his warriors, and his commanders, and all his people, his treasures and his treasure vessels, and preserved his life. He went hiding over hedges and ways, woods and wilds, till through the divine guidance he came safe to the isle of Æthelney.”¹

THE life of St. Neot was first written in Alfred’s time, and is quoted by his friend ² Asser. This primitive tract of Neot’s biography is not now to be found ; but we may reasonably suppose that the ancient lives of this saint which have survived to us were composed from it.

THE next work in point of antiquity is the MS. Latin life of the same person in the Cotton Library, ascribed by the title of the MS. to an Abbot of Croyland in 1180. It says :—

“ THE king hearing that the rage and cruelty of the barbarians were rushing immediately upon him, and considering the dispersion of his people, began to fluctuate to and fro in his mind. At length, yielding to his discreeter judgment, he retired from his enemies alone and unarmed, and exposed to be the sport of

¹ Tha se hepe swa swithlic pær, and swa neh Englelanðe, he rone forpwyht, fleamer cepte, his cempen ealle forlet and his hepetogen and eall his theode, mabmes and mabmæten and his life gebeaph. Ferðe tha lutiænðe geonð heger and peger, geonð pudes and pelðes swa tha he thuph Lober swiſtunge gefund become to Æthelning-ege. MSS. British Museum, Vespas. D. 14.

² Ut in vita Sancti patris Neoti legitur. Asser, p. 30.

flight. As he was entirely ignorant whither he should turn himself, or where the necessity of his flight should impel him, he let fortune lead him, and came unexpectedly into a place surrounded on all sides with extensive marshes. This place was in the extreme boundary of England, on the borders of Britain, which, in their language, is called Ethelingaia, and in ours (Latin) means, the royal island.”³

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THE fuller account of Matthew of Westminster seems to be taken chiefly from Ramsay's *Life of St. Neot*, written within half a century after the preceding.

“IN the extreme borders of the English people towards the west, there is a place called *Æthelingeie*, or the isle of the nobles. It is surrounded by marshes, and so inaccessible that no one can get to it but by a small vessel. It has a great wood of alders, which contains stags and goats, and many animals of that kind. Its solid earth is scarcely two acres in breadth. Alfred having left the few fellow-soldiers whom he had, that he might be concealed from his enemies, sought this place alone, where seeing the hut of an unknown person he turned to it, asked and received a shelter. For some days he remained there as a guest and in poverty, and contented with the fewest necessaries. But the king, being asked who he was and what he sought in

³ MSS. Claud. A. 5.

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such a desert place, answered that he was one of the king's thegns, had been conquered with him in a battle, and flying from his enemies had reached that place. The herdsman believing his words and moved with pity, carefully supplied him with the necessaries of life."⁴

Alfred's
adventures
in Ethel-
ney.

HIS first incident is thus described by his friend Asser, with an allusion to a contemporary life of Neot not now extant.

"HE led an unquiet life there, at his cow-herd's. It happened that on a certain day the rustic wife of this man prepared to bake her bread. The king, sitting then near the hearth, was making ready his bow and arrows, and other warlike instruments, when the ill-tempered woman beheld the loaves burning at the fire. She ran hastily and removed them, scolding the king, and exclaiming, 'You, man! you will not turn the bread you see burning, but you will be very glad to eat it when done.' This unlucky woman little thought she was addressing the king Alfred."⁵

⁴ Matt. West. p. 329, 330.

⁵ Asser, p. 30, 31. Although in the Cotton MSS. of Asser this passage is wanting, yet it was in Camden's ancient MSS., and the preceding words, "apud quondam suum vacarium" are in the Cotton MS. Dr. Whitaker, in his usual hasty manner, boldly calls it an interpolation taken from Ramsay's Life of St. Neot, which he has printed. But Dr. W. did not know of the earlier life in the Claud. MS., nor of the still more ancient Saxon life, Vesp. D. 14., both of which contain the incident. Malmsbury also mentions the

THE same event is told in the Saxon life CHAP.
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thus:—

“HE took shelter in a swain’s house, and, also him and his evil wife diligently served. It happened that on one day the swain’s wife heated her oven, and the king sat by it warming himself by the fire. She knew not then that he was the king. Then the evil woman was excited, and spoke to the king with an angry mind: ‘Turn thou those loaves, that they burn not; for I see daily that thou art a great eater.’ He soon obeyed this evil woman, because she would scold. He then, the good king, with great anxiety and sighing, called to his Lord, imploring his pity.”

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THE Latin life gives a little more detail.

“ALFRED, a fugitive, and exiled from his people, came by chance and entered the house of a poor herdsman, and there remained some days concealed, poor and unknown.

“in sylvam profugus,” and the subsequent education of the herdsman for the church, and his elevation to the see of Winchester, p. 242.

“*And on sumes swanes huse his hleop Ʒeorne and eac swylce him and his Ʒele Ʒife Ʒeorne heƷe. Ðit Ʒelamp sume ðeige tha thaer swanes Ʒif hætte hepe oƷen and se king thop biƷ Ʒæt hleoppinde hine beo than Ʒýre. Than heo Ʒer nýten the he king Ʒepe. Tha Ʒearth tha Ʒele Ʒif Ʒæringe aƷtýreð and eƷæth to than kinge eorne moðe “Wenð thu tha hlafe, tha heo ne Ʒorbeornere: Ʒorþam ic ƷeƷeo ðeighamlice tha thu mýcel æte eapt.” Ðe Ʒær Ʒone Ʒeheppum than Ʒele Ʒife. Forþan the heo nebe Ʒolde. Ðe tha, se Ʒode king, mið mýcelpe anƷrumnýrre and Ʒiccetunge to his Ðrihten clýpode, his mildre biðbende. MSS. Vesp. D. 14.*

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"IT happened that on the Sabbath day, the herdsman as usual led his cattle to their accustomed pastures, and the king remained alone in the cottage with the man's wife. She, as necessity required, placed a few loaves, which some call loudas, on a pan with fire underneath, to be baked for her husband's repast and her own on his return.

"WHILE she was necessarily busied like peasants on other affairs, she went anxious to the fire and found the bread burning on the other side. She immediately assailed the king with reproaches: 'Why, man! do you sit thinking there, and are too proud to turn the bread? Whatever be your family, with such manners and sloth, what trust can be put in you hereafter? If you were even a nobleman, you will be glad to eat the bread which you neglect to attend to.' The king, though stung by her upbraidings, yet heard her with patience and mildness; and roused by her scolding took care to bake her bread as she wished."⁷

MATTHEW of Westminster's statement of the same circumstance is to the same effect. "It happened that the herdsman, one day, as usual, led his swine to their accustomed pasture, and the king remained at home alone with the wife. She placed her bread under the ashes of the fire to bake, and was employed in other busi-

⁷ MSS. Claud. A. 5. p. 157.

ness, when she saw the loaves burning, and said to the king in her rage: ‘ You will not turn the bread you see burning, though you will be very glad to eat it when done.’ The king, with a submitting countenance, though vexed at her upbraidings, not only turned the bread, but gave them to the woman well baked and unbroken.”⁸

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It is stated, that he afterwards munificently rewarded the peasant, whose name was Denulf. He observed him to be a man of capacity; he recommended him to apply to letters, and to assume the ecclesiastical profession. He afterwards made him bishop of Winchester.⁹

His munificence to the peasant.

THE homely taunts of this angry rustic must have sounded harshly to the yet haughty king: but he was now levelled to her condition, or rather he was even more destitute than herself; for he was dependent on the bounty of her poverty, and had no asylum but in her humble cottage. All the honours and all the pleasures of his life had vanished like a dream: self-reproach, if he had only suffered himself to be surprised, and more poignant feelings, if his personal misconduct had driven his subjects to

⁸ Matt. West. 330.

⁹ Malmsh. 242. Flor. Wig. 318. As Florence of Worcester mentions this elevation of Denulf, p. 318., he ought not to have been mentioned as an evidence against the incident as stated by Asser; yet Dr. Whitaker unguardedly so produces him, p. 239. Matt. West. 332. Denulf died bishop of Winchester in 909. Sax. Chron. 102

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desert him in the hour of need, concurred to aggravate his distress. In the solitude of his retreat, and amid its penury and mortifications, it was natural that he should be pensive and melancholy, and yet improved. It is in its distresses that arrogance learns to know its folly; that man perceives his individual insignificance, discerns the importance of others to his well-being and even existence, and feels the necessity and the comfort of believing or hoping that there exists a Protector more powerful than himself. Humility, urbanity, philanthropy, decorum, and self-coercion, all the virtues which are requisite to produce the good-will of our species, are among the offspring which nature has allotted to adversity, and which the wise and good have in every age adopted in their eclipse.¹⁰ The sequel of Alfred's reign, which was a stream of virtue and intelligence, attests that his fortunate humiliation disciplined his temper, softened his heart, increased his piety, and enlightened his understanding.¹¹ His mind

¹⁰ "I honour solitude, the meditating sister of society, and often her legislator, who converts the experience or active life into principles, and its passions into nutritious juices." Herder's *Outlines of the Philosophy of the History of Man*, p. 511. Eng. ed. 1800.

¹¹ Asser's reflection at this period of Alfred's life seems to allude to his previous imperfections. He says he was afflicted, "that he might know that there exists one Lord of all to whom every knee must bow; in whose hands are the hearts of kings; who deposes the mighty from their seat, and exalts the humble," p. 31.

was too powerful and too intelligent, either to remain inactive or to fail of discerning the best means of emancipating the country from its barbaric invaders.

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His subsequent measures to regain his throne, and to surround it with its natural and impregnable bulwark, the confidence of his people, were judicious and exemplary. And an auspicious incident occurred at this juncture to excite both their courage and his own perseverance.

UBBO, who, with his brothers Ingwar and Halfden, had conducted the fatal fleet to England, to avenge the death of their father, and who had distinguished himself in the massacre at Peterborough, and who was now the only survivor of those children of Ragnar Lodbrog, who had afflicted England, had been harassing the Britons in South Wales, where he had wintered. After much of that slaughter, which always attended their invasions, he returned with twenty-three ships to the English Channel. Sailing by the north of Devonshire, the castle of Kynwith¹² attracted his notice, where many of the king's thegns had embraced the protection of the Earl of Devon. The place was unprovided with subsistence. It had no stronger fortification than a Saxon wall¹³; but Ubbo

Ubbo's attack in Devonshire.

¹² Risdon places this castle near Aplemore; it is called Henney Castle. 1 Gough's Camden, p. 40.

¹³ Asser seems to treat Saxon fortifications with some contempt; for he says, that it was omnino immunitam nisi

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found that its rocky situation made it impregnable against all assault, except at the eastern point. He also remarked that no water was near it, and consequently that a short siege would reduce the inhabitants to every misery of thirst and famine. He preferred the certain victory of a blockade to a bloody attack, and surrounded it with his followers.

ODUN saw the extent of his distress, and the inevitable certainty on which the pagans calculated; and determined on a vigorous sally. It was bravely executed. While the dawn was mingling with the darkness, Odun pierced at once to the tent of Ubbo, slew him and his attendants, and turning on the affrighted host, destroyed the largest part; a few reached their vessels, and escaped. An immense booty rewarded the victors, among which the capture of their magical standard, the famous Reafan, was to the eye of ignorant superstition a more fatal disaster than even Ubbo's death, and their destructive defeat.¹⁴

quod mænia nostro more erecta solum modo haberet, p. 32.
He says he had seen this castle himself.

¹⁴ Asser, 32. The Sax. Chron. makes the number of the slain 840. Flor. Wig. 1200, p. 316. Asser describes the raven as a banner woven by Ubbo's three sisters, the daughters of Ragnar Lodbrog, in one noon-tide. It was believed that the bird appeared as if flying when the Danes were to conquer, but was motionless when they were to be defeated. Asser adds, *et hoc sæpe probatum est, p. 33.*

WHEN Easter had passed, Alfred, now twenty-eight years of age, began to execute a new plan of operations. The place of his retreat, as already described, was peculiarly fitted to be made a military post of the most defensible nature, and the king fortified it as his place of safety.¹⁵

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THE fullest account of the exertions of Alfred, during his seclusion in this little¹⁶ island, is that left by the Abbot of Croyland.

Exertions
of Alfred
before he
discovered
himself to
his people.

“THE king, overwhelmed with the disgrace of poverty and dejection, and, instead of his royal palace, being confined to a vile hovel, was one day casually recognised by some of his people, who, being dispersed and flying all around, stopped where he was. An eager desire then arose both in the king and his knights to devise a remedy for their fugitive condition.

“IN a few days they constructed a place of defence as well as they could; and here recovering a little his strength, and comforted by the protection of his few friends, he began to

He might have said that nothing was easier to be contrived. Bartholin has collected some traditions concerning such standards, and the raven's prophetic powers, p. 472—480.

¹⁵ Dr. Whitaker's account of the present state of this place, of the existing traditions there, and of his own feelings and belief, are worth reading. See his *St. Neot*.

¹⁶ A jewel of gold, enamelled like a bulla or amulet, to hang round the neck, circumscribed, *Alfred meþ heht geþýpcan*, i. e. *Alfred ordered me to be made*, was found here. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum. 1 Gough's *Camden*, 70. It is engraved in that work, p. 59. and elsewhere.

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move in warfare against his enemies. His companions were very few in number, compared with the barbarian multitude; nor could they on the first day, or by their first attacks, obtain any advantages: yet they neither quitted the foe nor submitted to their defeats; but, supported by the hope of victory, as their small number gradually increased, they renewed their efforts, and made one battle but the preparation for another.

“SOMETIMES conquerors, and sometimes conquered, they learnt to overcome time by chances, and chance by time. The king, both when he failed and when he was successful, preserved a cheerful countenance, and supported his friends by his example.”¹⁷

To this natural and intelligible account, we may add, from Asser, that the only land-access to their little island was by one bridge, on which by great labour they raised two defensive towers, or, as we should now call them, *têtes du pont*. From this fortified retreat, with his noble vassals in Somersetshire, he was continually assailing the Danes.¹⁸

THE same incidents are implied in the brief narrative of Matthew of Westminster. “While the king remained alone with the herdsman, there came to him many of his warriors; and

¹⁷ MS. Claud. A. 5. p. 157.

¹⁸ Asser, Vit. p. 60.

by his directions they built a fortress with towers and defences, and from thence made continual irruptions on their enemies."¹⁹

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THEY led here an uncertain and unquiet life. They had no subsistence but what they could obtain by plunder, hunting, or fishing²⁰, in the adjoining districts. Here, dispossessed of his kingdom, the king concealed himself with a few of his friends among these woods and marshes, living on the fish they caught²¹ for several weeks. He had none to aid him but a part of his own household.²²

THE plan of Alfred, suggested by the lonesomeness and security of his retreat, was as efficacious as it was wisely adapted to his position and necessities. With a small force he attacked without ceasing his superior enemies, wherever he found any of their parties or camps accessible to his attempts. His object achieved, or repulsed by a superior force, he retired with a celerity which baffled pursuit to his unknown asylum, and soon harassed the enemy with hostility in a distant quarter. By day and by night, at dawn, in the evening twilight, from woods and marshes, he was ever rushing on the

¹⁹ Matt. West. p. 330.

²⁰ Ran. Higden Polych. p. 257. Bromton, 811.

²¹ Ethelred. Abb. p. 353.

²² Ethelwerd, Chron. 845.

BOOK IV. Northmen with all the advantages of selection and surprise.²³

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By these expeditions Alfred provided himself and his party with sustenance; he inured himself to war and skilful generalship; he improved in his knowledge of the country, secured the attachment of his friends, collected others, provided new resources of character for his future life, collected perpetual intelligence of the motions of the Danes, revived the spirit of the country, and prepared it for that grand exploit which was soon to crown his labours.

DURING his residence in this fenny isle, an incident occurred, which the monks are particular in recording as a proof of the improvement of his disposition; and as it shows both his situation and his benevolent temper, it is worth our reciting, though without those additions of celestial machinery with which the tenants of the cloister seem to have been as warmly enamoured as any possessor of the epic laurel.

His charity.

HIS wife and family had joined him. His friends were abroad in search of food, and his queen and one thegn only were with him.²⁴ It was his custom when alone here to be reading the books of Scripture, hymns, or the annals of his country, and the actions of illustrious²⁵ men.

²³ MSS. Claud. Wallingf. p. 537.

²⁴ Sim. Dun. Hist. Cuthb. p. 71.

²⁵ Ingulf, p. 26. Ethel. Abb. 353.

He was sitting by himself reading one of these, when he was interrupted by a feeble knock at his gate, and by the lowly cry of poverty supplicating relief. He remembered the state of penury in which he had reached the same spot: he laid down his book, and called his thegn to give the poor claimant some food. The thegn found only one loaf in their store, which would not suffice for their family on their return from their toilsome expedition, and a little wine. Alfred thought the necessities of the mendicant more urgent than their own, and reserving a part of the pittance for his friends, he presented the beggar with the rest.²⁶

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²⁶ Sim. Dun. 71. Ing. 26. Ethel. 353.

CHAP. X.

*The Battle which produced ALFRED's Restoration.*BOOK
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AFTER passing about six months in this retreat¹, Alfred revolved in his mind the means of surprising the main army of the Northmen, which still continued in Wiltshire. It was encamped on and about Bratton-hill, at Eddendun, near Westbury.² And it is a tradition

¹ Mr. Walker, in his notes to Sir John Spelman's Life of Alfred, computes, that Alfred's seclusion did not last six months. Chippenham was taken in January, and the great battle which produced his restoration was fought seven weeks after Easter. Easter day was in that year the 23d of March; p. 30. The seventh week after that would of course be the 11th of May, which does not allow the retreat to have been five months.

² A part of Mr. Walker's curious note is worth translating: "Eddendun lies under Bratton-hill, which is lofty, abrupt, and of difficult ascent: on its summit there are yet extant the trenches and ditches of the Danish camp. Two branches, for the sake of water, spread to the foot of the mountain. Here, weary of the confinement of a camp, and under no alarm of any hostile troops, the Danes diffused themselves to Eddendun, and over the neighbouring plain. It is probable that the king had notice of this descent, and resolved to examine the fact in person." Mr. Walker hints, that the king may have made his attack between their army and the hill, so as to separate them from their encampment. Not. Vit. Ælfredi, p. 33.

which some of the most respectable of our ancient chroniclers have recorded, that he resolved to inspect their camp in person, before he made the attempt. His early predilection for the Saxon poetry³ and music, had qualified him to assume the character of an harper; and thus disguised, he went to the Danish tents. His harp and singing excited notice; he was admitted to their king's table; he heard their conversation, and contemplated their position unsuspected. He quitted their encampment without molestation, and reached his little isle in safety.⁴ There is nothing improbable in the incident, nor is it inconsistent with the manners of the time.

It was now Whitsuntide. He sent confidential messengers to his principal friends in the three adjacent counties, Wilts, Hampshire, and Somerset, announcing his existence; declaring his intention of joining them, and requiring them to collect their followers secretly, and to meet him in military array on the east of

³ See before, p. 9.

⁴ This incident is mentioned by Ingulf, who was a lad in the reign of Edward the Confessor, p. 26.; by Malmsbury, p. 43.; both highly respectable chroniclers; and by Higden in his Polych. 258. It is also in the MSS. Chronicles of Henry de Silgrave, Cleop. A. 12., and of Joh. Bever, Harl. Coll. 641. That others omit it may be accounted for by their desire of attributing the victory to St. Neot's miraculous interference, rather than to the plans of the king's previously exerted sagacity.

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Selwood Forest.⁵ A dream, of St. Neot's appearing to him, and promising him both assistance and a great success, is placed at this crisis. It may have been suggested by the king's policy, or may have occurred naturally from his memory of his sacred monitor, and anticipating its encouraging effects, he may have circulated it among his friends.⁶

A CELEBRATED place called the stone of Egbert⁷, was the appointed place of meeting. As the Anglo-Saxons had suffered severely in his absence, the tidings of his being alive, and the prospect of his re-appearance, filled every bosom with joy. All who were entrusted with the secret crowded enthusiastically to the place appointed, and the horns, trumpets, and clashing of the arms of those who came, and of those who welcomed the loyal patriots, loudly expressed their mutual congratulations and exultation.⁸

⁵ This was named in British Coit mawr, the great wood. Asser, 33. The county (perhaps from the wood) was anciently called *Sealpubŕcine*. Ethelw. p. 837. The wood reaches from Frome to Burham, near fifteen miles in length, and six in breadth. 1 Gough's Camden, 78. Seal, in Saxon, is a willow-tree. This was, therefore, a wood of willows; and so the MSS. Claud. names it, *sylvam salicis*.

⁶ Both the MSS. lives of St. Neot, and Asser's Annals, mention this.

⁷ Asser, 33. Flor. Wig. MSS. Claud.

⁸ MSS. Claud. p. 158. That Alfred invited Rollo out of France to his aid, and that Rollo came to help him, is a circumstance which I have found in Wallingford only (p. 537.), and therefore cannot state it as a fact on his single authority. It is not probable of itself; and yet it is difficult to account for its invention, if false.

Two days were passed in these arrivals and rejoicings, and in making the necessary arrangements for the consequential exertion. Some rumours of what was preparing reached the ears of Godrun, the Danish king⁹, but nothing to explain the meditated blow. He called in his forces to be prepared; but as he saw no collected enemy, he had no object before him to move against.

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ON the third day Alfred marched his new-raised army to *Æglea*¹⁰, seized an adjoining hill; encamped that night there, and again reconnoitred his enemies' position.¹¹ In the morning they advanced rapidly to the place called *Ethandune*, where the northern myriads were overspreading the plain.

ALFRED halted to form them into a skilful arrangement, and made a short but impressive address. He reminded them that they were about to combat both for their country and for

⁹ MSS. Claud.

¹⁰ Asser, 34. *Ecglea* has been conjectured to be the village *Leigh*. Gough's *Camden*, p. 100. Dr. Whitaker prefers *Highley*, near *Whaddon*, p. 266. Gibson suggested *Clay-hill*, near *Warminster*.

¹¹ MSS. Claud. p. 158, 159. Dr. Whitaker thinks the present *Yatton*, about five miles from *Chippenham*, to be the representative of *Ethandun*. He adds, "But the battle itself was a little lower on the *Avon*, at *Slaughter-ford*," p. 268. Gibson mentions a tradition of the inhabitants, of a great slaughter of the *Danes* at this place. I remark that the place is called *Assandune* by *Sim. Dun.* p. 71.; *Edderandun* by *Hoveden*, 417.; *Ethandune* by *Ethelwerd*, 845.

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themselves; he conjured them to act manly, and he promised them a glorious¹² victory. They advanced when he had concluded, and soon beheld the invading warriors before them, but whether resting in their camp, or arrayed for battle, is not clearly expressed. The attack was meant, by the secrecy and celerity of the movement, to be a surprise, and most probably was so, and the expressions used by most of the chroniclers imply this circumstance.

The battle
at Ethandune.

THE Anglo-Saxons rushed on their enemies with an impetuosity which disordered valour was unable to withstand. It was Alfred who led them on; who seemed to have risen from his grave to destroy them. The discharge of the Anglo-Saxon arrows was succeeded by the attack of their lances, and soon it became a personal combat of swords.¹³ The Northmen resisted with their usual individual intrepidity; but their efforts, though furious, were unavailing. Seeing a standard-bearer leading on one of his divisions with great bravery, Alfred is represented to have pointed him out to his warriors as St. Neot himself at their head.¹⁴ The belief increased their enthusiasm; their resolute attack was every where irresistible; and the Northmen gave way. Their bodies strewed the plain, till a part found refuge with their king in a neighbouring fortification; Alfred was thus left the

¹² MSS. Claud. p. 159.

¹³ MSS. Claud.

¹⁴ MSS. Claud. p. 159.

master of that important field, which, from the marshes and penury of Ethelingey, exalted him to the throne of England.¹⁵

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THE king, with vigorous judgment, followed the Northmen to their fortress; and, contrary to their hopes, encamped himself strongly round it. By this decisive measure he cut them off from all reinforcement, and confined them to the scanty subsistence which happened to be in their station. While the siege lasted, the strength of Alfred augmented in a proportion which destroyed in the Danes every hope of emancipation. They lingered in unavailing distress for fourteen days, and then, oppressed with cold and famine, and worn down by fatigue and dismay, the imprisoned chiefs humbly supplicated the mercy of their conqueror.¹⁶

¹⁵ Asser, 34. Mr. Gough remarks, that on the south-west face of the hill, near Edindon, there is a most curious monument unnoticed by Bishop Gibson. It is a white horse, in a walking attitude, cut out of the chalk, fifty-four feet high, from his toe to his chest, and to the tip of his ear, near one hundred feet high, and from ear to tail one hundred feet long. The learned editor of Camden thinks, that it was made to commemorate this celebrated victory, p. 100, 101. Yet Whitaker, p. 273., has remarked, that Wise, in 1742, declared it had been wrought by the inhabitants of Westbury in the memory of persons then living.

¹⁶ Asser, 34. Flor. Wig. 317. Sax. Chron. 85. Whitaker, p. 269., supposes the fortress to which the Danes fled to have been the double entrenchment in Bury-wood, which is thus described by Gough: "On Colerne-down, on the fosse near Wraxhall and Slaughterford, in Bury-wood, is North-wood, a camp of eighteen acres, double works, not Roman: the entrance from Colerne-down," p. 99.

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THUS, after a very doubtful struggle for the sovereignty of the island, during twelve years of peril and calamity, the Anglo-Saxons by this battle triumphed over their enemies, and surmounted one of the most formidable invasions that any nation had experienced. To this great achievement, to the talents which planned, and to the energy which accomplished it, words can add no praise. It was the triumph of mind over barbarian strength; of a wisely conceiving and arranging intelligence over superiority of number, elation from past successes, and a hardihood of personal valour which no competition could excel. It was as complete in its beneficial effects as it was brilliant in its immediate glory.

THE immediate conditions which Alfred imposed, were, hostages, which were not reciprocal, and oaths that they should leave his dominions. These, however, were of puerile importance, because Godrun, having got released from his confinement, might have acted with the same contempt of diplomatic and religious faith, for which his countrymen were notorious. Alfred had learnt that oaths and hostages were but bonds of sand, and therefore relied no longer upon these.

THE comprehensive mind of Alfred conceived and executed the magnanimous policy of making Godrun and his followers his allies, and of leading them to agriculture, civilisation, and Christianity. To effect this, he persuaded them to

exchange their Paganism for the Christian religion, and on these terms he admitted them to cultivate and possess East Anglia as peaceful colonists.

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AFTER some weeks, Godrun, to whom the conditions were acceptable, went with thirty of his chiefs to Aulre¹⁷, near Ethelney, where, Alfred standing as his godfather, he was baptised by the name of Ethelstan. The ceremony was completed a week after at the royal town of Wædmor. He stayed twelve days with the king, as his guest, and received magnificent presents at his departure.¹⁸

SUCH a conversion could be but nominal; but the religious tenets of the unreflective mass of mankind are little else. The object of Alfred was to place them immediately under new habits, which would give them dispositions more compatible with the well-being of society than their ferocious Paganism. To time, reflection, and tuition, he left their further progress in the system he revered.

GODRUN, to fulfil his engagements with Alfred, left Chippenham, and went into Gloucestershire.

¹⁷ Asser, 35. Mr. Walker thinks, it was the modern Aulre, an inconsiderable place near Ethelney. Wedmor was not less than twelve miles from it. At Wedmor, the white garments and mystic veil, then appropriated to baptism, were given. Vit. Ælf. 35.

¹⁸ Asser, 35. MSS. Vesp. D. 14. Flor. 318. Sax. Chron. 85.

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He remained at Cirencester¹⁹ a year, and then marching into East Anglia, he divided it among his soldiers, and they cultivated it.²⁰

ALTHOUGH the Northmen came to England as the ministers of vengeance; yet, by residing in it for twelve years, they must have become more sensible to the charms of civilised life. The bands under Halfden attested this impression when they cultivated Northumbria. Having thus turned their swords into ploughshares, they gave no assistance to Godrun in his invasion of Wessex; and if left unmolested, and not endangered, it was probable they would continue to be pacific. By admitting Godrun to imitate their example, Alfred calmed their inquietude; and by giving this occupation to Godrun, he secured safety to himself; the beginning change in the manners of the North, was cherished in its most important crisis; and, as the Danes became civilised in East Anglia, they would inevitably, for their own safety, form a barrier defending the most exposed coast of

¹⁹ Cirrenceastre, qui Britannice Cairceri nominatur, quæ est in meridiana parte Huicciurum; ibique per unum annum mansit. Asser, 35.

²⁰ An. 880. Cirrenceastre deserens, ad orientales Anglos perrexit, ipsam que regionem dividens, cæpit inhabitare. Asser, 35. *Depe for se hepe of Cypenceastre on Eart Engle, and gefæter the lond, and geðælde.* Sax. Chron. 86. This printed chronicle dates their occupation of East Anglia in 879. The MS. chronicle places it, like Asser, in 880. Col. Lib. Tib. B. 4. p. 35.

the island from their more ferocious country-men.²¹

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²¹ Saxo places a Gormo Anglicus soon after Ragnar Lodbrog, p. 178. In the Chronicon of Eric he is surnamed Enske, the Englishman, and is there said to have been baptized in England. 1 Langb. 158. Hamsfort says, he went to England, and was converted by Alfred; ib. p. 37. If so, he was the Godrun here mentioned.

CHAP. XI.

Review of the Causes and Consequences of the NORTHMAN Invasions.—The Actions of HASTINGS, and his Invasions of ENGLAND.—ALFRED's Death.

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ALFRED having permitted Godrun to colonise East Anglia, the limits of their respective territories were settled by a treaty, which still exists.¹ By the first article, the boundary was placed in the Thames, the river Lea to its source, and Watling Street to the Ouse.² The spaces thus marked, contained Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, part of Hertfordshire, part of Bedfordshire, and a little of Huntingdonshire.³ These regions were sub-

¹ It is in Wilkins's *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, p. 47. The beginning may be quoted as an intimation of the parties to such transactions: "Thiſ iſ the ppythe tha Ælfræð cýning and Luthpyn cýning, and ealler Ængel cýnnes witan and eal ſeo theob the on Eaſt-Englum beoð, ealle gecepen habbað and mid aþum gefæſtnoð ſoð hi ſýlfe and ſoð heopa gýngan ge ſoð geþoſene, ge ſoð ungeþoſene, the goðer milte pecca oðthe upe."

² The words are, "Æfeſt ýmb upe landgemepa upon Temeſe, and ðonne upon Ligan and anblanð Ligan oð hiſe æpýlm, ðonne on gepiht to Bebanſoðða, ðon upon Uſan oð Wætlngarſet," p. 47.

³ Sir John Spelman places Northumbria alſo under Godrun, p. 66. He is certainly ſanctioned by Malmsbury,

jected to Godrun, and were filled with ⁴ Danes. Northumbria was afterwards put under Guthred, who governed Deira; and Egbert ruled in Bernicia. ⁵

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THE sovereignty of Mercia, on the defeat of the Danes ⁶, fell into the power of Alfred. He did not, however, avowedly incorporate it with Wessex. He discontinued its regal honours, and constituted Ethelred its military commander, to

p. 43.; but Asser, 35.; Florence, 328.; Saxon Chron. 86.; Ethelwerd, 845.; Hunt. 350.; Ingulf, 26.; and Mailros, 144. unite in merely stating Godrun's occupation of East-Anglia. The grammatical construction of the Saxon treaty appears to me to imply no more.

⁴ The other articles of the treaty are legal regulations. Spelman's Summary may be cited: 'They provide "that there shall be one and the same estimation of person, both of English and Dane, and the mulct for slaughter of them both alike. That a thane of the king's being questioned for manslaughter, or any offence above four marks, shall be tried by twelve of his peers, and others by eleven of their peers, and one of the king's men. That no buying of men, horse, or oxen, shall be justifiable without voucher of the seller, and his avowing the sale. And, lastly, that there shall be no licentious intercourse of the soldiers of the one with those of the other army," p. 68. Hearne's ed.

⁵ Mailros, 145. In 890, Godrun died in East Anglia, Flor. 328.; and Guthred in Northumbria died 894. Sim. Dun. 133., and 70. Mailros, 146.

⁶ Spelman thinks that the superior sovereignty of Alfred was preserved in his treaties with the Danes. He remarks from Malmsbury, that Alfred gave the dominion to Godrun, *ut eas sub fidelitate regis jure hereditario foveret*, and that the very joining in the laws shows that the one was a vassal, p. 69.

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whom he afterwards married his daughter, Ethelfleda, when her age permitted.⁷

THE reign of Alfred, from his restoration to his death, was wise and prosperous. One great object of his care was, to fortify his kingdom against hostile attacks. He rebuilt the cities and castles which had been destroyed, and constructed new fortifications in every useful place; and he divided the country into hundreds and tythings for its better military defence and internal peace, and to repel that disposition for depredation which was prevailing even among his own subjects.⁸ By these defensive precautions, he gave to the country a new face, and not only kept in awe the Northmen who were in it, but was prepared to wage, with advantage, that defensive war, which the means and disposition of the impetuous invaders could never successfully withstand.

Another
attempt of
the North-
men.

THE policy of Alfred's conduct towards Godrun was evinced and rewarded immediately afterwards. A large fleet of Northmen arrived in the Thames, who joined Godrun, as if desirous to unite with him in a new warfare; but, Alfred having pacified his ambition, these ad-

⁷ It is said in the Saxon life of Neot, that after the pacification, Godrun, with the remains of his army, departed in peace to his own country, "to his ægenen eapðe mib ealpe ribbe." MSS. Vesp. D. 14. This seems to imply a return to Denmark, as East Anglia was not properly his own country.

⁸ Ingulf, 27. Matt. West. 345.

venturers found no encouragement to continue here. They wintered at Fulham, and then followed their leader, the famous Hastings, into Flanders; and remained a year at Ghent.⁹

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ALFRED discerned the inestimable benefit to England of creating a naval armament for the protection of its coast from the adventurers that now swarmed on the ocean. This king, who never used war but from necessity, which he deplored, may be considered as the founder of the English navy. In this, however, he was but the copyist of Charlemagne, whose policy of building ships to repress the northern invasions, has been noticed before.¹⁰ Alfred had already experienced the efficacy of a few ships of war. In 882, he was prepared to engage in a naval conflict, and took two ships. The chief of two others and the crews, but not until they were all wounded, submitted to him.¹¹

THE army of the Northmen on the Scheld divided into two branches. One moved against Eastern France; the other invaded England,

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Another
attempt.

⁹ Asser, 35, 36. Malmsb. 43.

¹⁰ About this time kings seem to have thought of navies. In 888, Mahomet, the Saracen king in Corduba, ordered ships to be built at Corduba, Hispali, and in other places where wood abounded. Of this king it is said, that as he was walking in his garden, a soldier exclaimed, "What a beautiful place! What a delightful day! How charming would life be if death never came!"—"You are wrong," answered Mahomet; "if death had never come, I should not have reigned here." Rod. Tol. Hist. Arab. c. 28. p. 24.

¹¹ Asser, 36. Sax. Chron. 86.

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and besieged Rochester. They built a castle against its gate, but the valour of the citizens prolonged their defence, till Alfred, with a great army, approached to relieve them. On the king's sudden presence, the Pagans abandoned their tower, all the horses which they had brought from France, and the greatest part of their captives, and fled with precipitation to their ships. Compelled by extreme necessity, they returned in the same summer to France.¹²

ALFRED, improving the hour of success, directed his fleet, full of warriors, to the East Anglians, where bands of depredation had arrived or were forming. They met thirteen war-ships of the Danes ready for battle. The Saxons attacked and took them, with all their booty; the crews fighting fiercely, till every one perished. But the Saxons forgot the suspicious vigilance which should always be maintained on an enemy's coast. The Danes gathered all their ships together, and coming on the fleet of Alfred, which was at the mouth of the river, they obtained a victory of superiority or surprise.¹³ The colonising followers of Godrun broke their treaty with Alfred; but as no ac-

¹² Asser, 37.

¹³ Asser, 38. The Cotton MSS. and the editions of Parker and Camden say, the English fleet dormiret. Florence, in relating the incident, substitutes the word rediret, p. 321.; and the Saxon Chron. p. 87., hampeapð penðon.

count of the consequences is transmitted to us, the peace was probably soon restored.¹⁴

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XL.
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THE most brilliant incident in the life of Alfred, was his defence of England against the formidable Hastings, which has not hitherto been sufficiently remarked. In his struggles against the Northmen, over whom he prevailed at Eddinton, he had to oppose power rather than ability; but in resisting Hastings, he had to withstand a skilful veteran, disciplined in all the arts of war by thirty years' practice of it; renowned for his numerous successes in other regions, and putting in action a mass of hostility, which might have destroyed a man of less ability than the Saxon king.

HASTINGS must have long been a favourite of tradition, because he was one of those heroic and successful adventurers, whom popular fame loves to celebrate, and sometimes to fancy. Time has, however, so much to record, such numerous characters to perpetuate, that it suffers many to fall into the shroud of oblivion, of whom our curiosity would desire a distinct memorial. Hastings has scarcely survived the general lot.¹⁵ We know him but by a few im-

Actions of
Hastings.

¹⁴ Asser, 39. A great army of Northmen was at this time attacking the continental Saxons and Frisians, *ibid.* 38.

¹⁵ Dudo has attempted to draw his character; but he has only recollected and applied to him thirty-two vituperative epithets from the Latin language, strung into hexameters. One of the historian's bright ideas is, that Hastings should be *non atramento verum carbone notandus*, p. 63.

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perfect fragments: they announce a character of high importance in his day, but they give us little acquaintance with his individual features.

HE first appears to us as selected by Ragnar Lodbrog, to initiate his son, Biorn, in the habit of piracy¹⁶: that he possessed the virtues of a vikingr, intrepidity, activity, and ferocity, is evinced by the office which Ragnar assigned him.

HE fulfilled his military duty with distinguished courage; for he led his young pupil into a collision with the Franks. To detail his successful depredations against this powerful nation¹⁷, would be to repeat much of those descriptions with which our annals abound.

CHARLES at last bought off his hostility, and the ambitious Northman is said to have formed the bold hope of conquering, for his master, the imperial dignity. To accomplish this project, he sailed to Italy¹⁸, and, mistaking the city

¹⁶ Hastings had been the nutritius of Biorn. Ord. Vital. p. 458. Snorre gives a similar instance, in Olaf Helga's history. This prince first began piracy at the age of twelve, under the tuition of Ran, his foster-father. Hastings is also mentioned by his contemporary Odo, an abbot of Clugny, in his account of St. Martin. 7 Bib. Mag. Pat. p. 637.

¹⁷ For his actions, see Gemmeticensis Hist. lib. ii. c. 5. p. 218. Dudo, lib. i. c. 1. p. 63. Ord. Vitalis, lib. iii. p. 458. The chronicles cited by Du Chesne, p. 25. and 32. of his Hist Norm. Scriptores. The authorities vary much as to the year of the attack. Some place it in 843, others in 851.

¹⁸ Chron. Turonense, p. 25. Du Chesne Script. Norm. Chron. Floriac. p. 32. ibid. Dudo, p. 64. Gemmet. 220.

Luna¹⁹ for Rome, he attacked and obtained it. CHAP.
The geographical error, and his ignorance of XI.
the country, occasioned him to return. But 884.
the scheme evinces the largeness of ambition,
and prospect, to which the fame and actions of
Ragnar was expanding the Northman mind.

HE landed again in France²⁰, and from him
and others, renewed destruction became its fate.
The government was weak, and the country
factious. Sometimes the assailants were bought
off.²¹ Sometimes the rivers were fortified to
prevent their ingress.²² A general assembly of
the powerful chiefs was in one year convened,
to provide an united defence²³; and an edict
was afterwards passed, awarding death to all
who should give breast-plates, arms, or horses,
to Northmen, even though it was to procure

¹⁹ Luna is mentioned in Strabo, p. 339.

²⁰ Dudo, p. 65. The *Gesta Normannorum* does not state
when they returned from Italy, but mentions that, in 869,
part returned to Italy, p. 3.

²¹ In 869, Charles gave them 4000 pounds of silver, and
raised this sum by exacting six denarii from every manso
ingenuili et de servili tres et de accolis unus et de duobus
hospitibus unus et decima de omnibus quæ negotiatores
videbantur habere. *Gesta Norman.* Du Chesne, p. 3. So
in 870, they obtained a great donation of silver, corn, wine,
and cattle, p. 4, &c.

²² Ann. Bertiniani, an. 864.

²³ In Junio 864, celebrantur Comitia Pistensia quo regem
et proceres traxerat generalis necessitas instituendi muni-
tiones contra Normannos. Capit. Reg. ap. 1 Lang. 558.

BOOK their own redemption.²⁴ But the particular
 IV. actions of Hastings are not now to be traced,
 884. because, though the chronicles of France abound
 with depredations, they often omit the name of
 the commanding adventurer.

HE appears to us, however, twice by name in the annals of Regino. Once in the year 867, as compelled to fortify himself in a church, sallying from which, he destroyed Count Robert the Strong²⁵, who has been called the greatest captain which France then had.²⁶ Again, in the year 874, as hovering about Bretagne, and accepting a defiance from a celebrated Breton warrior, whose courage excited his admiration, and averted or deterred his hostility.²⁷

IN 879 he was in England, as before mentioned, at Fulham; but as he received no co-operation from Godrun, whom Alfred had wisely pacified, he sailed to Ghent²⁸, and joined vigorously in those furious assaults by which

²⁴ Capit. Reg. ap. 1 Lang. 558. When the Pope Nicolaus cited the bishops of France, they excused themselves on account of the Northmen. 1 Lang. 568.

²⁵ Regino, p. 481. Pistor. Script. Germ.

²⁶ Cet fut ainsi que perit alors Robert le Fort le plus grand capitaine qu'il y eust alors en France. Daniel Hist. de France, vol. ii. p. 99.

²⁷ Regino, p. 55.

²⁸ It is Malmsbury who has affixed his name to this incident. Asser and others mention the arrival at Fulham, and the departure. Malmsbury says, "*Cæteri ex Danis qui Christiani esse recusassent, cum Hastingo mare transfretaverunt ubi quæ mala fecerunt indiginæ norunt,*" p. 43.

the kingdom of France was for thirteen years again desolated, and endangered.²⁹ CHAP.
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DEFEATED at length by the imperial forces, Hastings marched to Boulogne, and constructing there a large fleet³⁰, he determined to try his fortune against Alfred in England. Perhaps weary of a life of wandering warfare, he now hoped to extort an English kingdom, or to be chosen king of the Anglo-Danes, as no chieftain of the Northmen was now surviving of equal celebrity with himself.

FIFTEEN years had now elapsed since Alfred's restoration, and he had employed the interval in executing every scheme which his active wisdom could form, for the improvement and protection of his people. His activity in defeating this attempt is a remarkable feature in a character so contemplative. The sudden invasion of Hastings compelled him to abandon literature and ease, for an unremitted exertion of sagacity and courage, in the decline of his life, and towards the end of his reign.

HASTINGS attacked Alfred with peculiar advantages. As the Northmen were in possession

²⁹ During this period they were once defeated by Louis: a song, in the ancient Teutonic language, written at the time, on this victory, still exists. Their siege of Paris, and its defence in 886, is narrated in a curious poem of Abbo, who was in the scene of action, and who has transmitted to us a full description of the incident. It is in Du Chesne; and 2 Langb. 76—106.

³⁰ Ethelwerd.

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of Northumbria and East Anglia, he had only to contend against the strength of Wessex and its dependencies. Godrun was dead ³¹, whose friendship with Alfred might have counteracted his invasion. If his countrymen in England declined to assist him by their active co-operation, he was sure of their neutrality, and he relied on their secret connivance. He shaped his operation in conformity to this political situation. By not landing in East Anglia and Northumbria, he avoided the means of exciting their jealousy; and by directing his fleet to Kent, he was enabled to profit from their vicinity. If he were defeated, they might afford him a shelter; if successful, they could immediately assist. On these occasions we must also recollect, that the assailing force did not merely consist of those who at first invaded. The landing actually made, usually drew to the enterprise many of the independent bands that were floating about. It may have been from these supplies that Hastings continued the struggle so long.

Two hundred and fifty vessels sailed to the south-west coast of Kent, and landed near Romney-marsh, at the eastern termination of the great wood or weald of Anderida. ³² They drew up their ships to the weald, four miles

³¹ He died 890. Sax. Chron. p. 90.

³² The Saxon Chronicle says, they landed at Limine muthan, p. 91. This authority describes this wood as then being 120 miles long from east to west, and 30 broad.

from the outward mouth of the river, and there attacked and mastered a fortification which the peasants of the country were constructing in the fens. They built a stronger military work at Apuldre, on the Rother, and ravaged Hampshire and Berkshire.³³

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Soon afterwards, Hastings himself appeared with the division he had selected to be under his own command, consisting of eighty ships, in the Thames. He navigated them into the East Swale, landed at Milton, near Sittingbourn, and threw up a strong intrenchment, which continued visible for ages.³³

THIS distribution of his forces was judicious. The two armies were but twenty miles asunder, and could therefore act separately, or combine for any joint operation which prudence or exigency should direct. The vicinity of their countrymen in Essex secured them from any attacks on the right, and the sea was their frontier on the left. The fertile districts in the east part of Kent became their spoil without a blow; and thus Hastings secured an ample supply, and a safe position, which courage and policy might convert into a kingdom.

WHILE Alfred prepared for measures of active resistance, he endeavoured to bind the Northumbrians and East Anglians to peace, by oaths and hostages; but the sympathetic temptations to

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³³ Sax. Chron. 92. Ethelw. 846. Matt. West. 345.

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plunder, which the presence and situation of Hastings presented, overcame their young religion and their honour. When the armies of Hastings pervaded the country in occasional excursions, they joined in the enterprise, and sometimes they made aggressions themselves.³⁴

IN this perilous conjuncture, Alfred, with cool judgment, distinguished the dangerous from the temporary attack. He neglected the East Anglians; he left the country which they could infest to the protection of its inhabitants, and the fortified cities which he had provided; and he encamped, with his collected army, between the two divisions of the Danes: the forest on the one side, and waters upon the other, protected his flanks, and gave security to his encampment.³⁵

By this judicious station he separated the invaders from the East Anglians, and at the same time kept asunder the two armies of the Northmen. He watched their movements, and was prepared to pour his avenging troops on either which should attempt to molest his people beyond the districts in which they resided. They sometimes endeavoured to plunder in places where the royal army was absent; but bands from the neighbouring cities, or Alfred's patrolling parties, both by day and night, chastised their ravages.³⁵

³⁴ Sax. Chron. 92. Flor. Wig. 329.

³⁵ Sax. Chron. 92. Flor. 330. Matt. West. 346.

THE king's discretion and activity awed even Hastings. It was so unlike the disorderly warfare which he had experienced in France, that for some time he seemed intimidated by an enemy whose strength was multiplied by his judgment. Alfred's position was too strong to be attacked without assured peril; and as the king despised the valour of temerity, he forbore to assault the Danes in their intrenchments. His hope was to acquire a certain victory from a Fabian caution, combined with a Fabian vigilance.

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THE plan of Alfred required the aid of time, and a permanent force: but the conditions of military service prevented the Saxon army from being perpetually in the field. To remedy this inconvenience, which would have robbed him of all the advantages he projected, Alfred divided his army into two bodies: of these, he called one to the warlike campaign, while the individuals of the other were enjoying peaceably their private occupations. After a reasonable service, the active portion was allowed to return home, and the rest quitted their domestic hearths to supply the place of their retiring countrymen. Thus while he avoided every necessity of rushing to a precipitate attack, he always presented to the invaders a strong and undiminished force.

SURPRISED at this new phenomenon, Hastings and his confederates remained in their camps, discontented, coerced, and overawed. The East

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Anglians, who watched the motions of Hastings, forbore any material warfare while he remained inactive.

WEARY of this destructive confinement, Hastings resolved at last to emancipate himself. To deceive Alfred, he sent his two sons to be baptized, and promised to leave the ³⁶ kingdom. Then, at the same instant that he took to his shipping, as if to fulfil his engagement, his main army suddenly broke up their encampments, and passed beyond the army of Alfred into the interior of the country. Their object was to reach the Thames, where fordable, and to pass into Essex, where they could unite. The celerity of their movements prevented his vigilance, and an ample booty was their first reward. But the wakeful monarch was not long outstripped; he pursued with a speed commensurate to theirs, while his son Edward advanced to the same point with the warriors which he had collected.³⁷ Alfred reached them at Farnham, in Surrey, and hastening into action, with as much judgment as he had before deferred it, he defeated them so decisively, and pursued them with such vigour, that they were compelled to plunge into the Thames, without a ford, for shelter against his sword. Their king,

³⁶ Matt. West. 346.

³⁷ It is Ethelwerd who mentions the prince's exertions. His chronicle in this part is obviously the translation of a Saxon song on this struggle, p. 846.

desperately wounded, was saved with difficulty, being carried over the river on horseback. They who could swim, escaped into Middlesex. Alfred followed them through this county into Essex, and drove them across Essex over the Coln. In this point they found a refuge in the Isle of Mersey. The defences of this place secured them from attack, and the king had no ships to make his siege effectual.³⁸ His forces maintained the blockade as long as their time of service, and their provisions, allowed³⁹ them. Alfred then marched thither with other forces from the county, whose allotment it was to continue the siege. The king of the Northmen being wounded, they were compelled to stay in their position. They now sued for peace, and agreed to retire from England.⁴⁰

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WHILE Alfred was thus victoriously employed, the exhortations of Hastings produced at last their effect on the Danish colonists of Northumbria and East Anglia. Unable to resist the wish of seeing a countryman on the throne

³⁸ Matt. West. 346. Bishop Gibson says of Mersey Island, which contains eight parishes, "It is a place of great strength, and may be almost kept against all the world; for which reason the Parliament clapped in a thousand men to guard it from being seized by the Dutch, about the beginning of the Dutch war." Camd. 359.

³⁹ The passage is curious: "Tha beætæt ƿio ƿýpð hie thæp utan tha hƿile the hie lengeƿt mete hæƿðon. Ac hie hæƿðon tha hiopa ƿtemn ƿeƿetenne and hiopa mete ƿenotubne." Sax. Chron. 93.

⁴⁰ Ethelwerd, 846.

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of Wessex, they combined their exertions to make two diversions in favour of the invaders. With a hundred ships they passed the North Foreland, and sailed along the southern coasts, while a fleet of forty vessels successfully attempted a passage round the north of the island. Their scheme was to attack in two points. The larger armament besieged Exeter; the other, reaching the Bristol Channel, surrounded a fortress in the north part of the county.⁴¹

THE king was preparing to renew the blockade of Mersey, when the intelligence reached him of these invasions in the west. The possession of Devonshire was perilous to his best interests. The Welsh might be stimulated to take advantage of his difficulties; and if this county had been occupied by Danes, from its maritime conveniences, it might be difficult to dislodge them. Alfred therefore determined, at every hazard, to have Exeter relieved. He left his eastern troops to proceed to the siege of Mersey; and he hastened to protect his endangered fortresses in Devonshire.

IN the meantime, Hastings had been more fortunate in his movement than his discomfited friends. He got out of the Swale, and crossing the Thames, he established himself at South Benfleet, near the Canvey Isle, in Essex; but he had not been able to abandon Kent with total

⁴¹ Sax. Chron. 93. Flor. Wig. 330.

impunity. The same superintending genius which had chased the invaders from Farnham to Mersey, had watched the paths of Hastings, and as soon as he had left his entrenched camp it was immediately attacked, and all his wealth and booty that it contained were taken, with his wife and children. Alfred baptised the boys; and, hoping to overcome the enmity of his competitor by liberality, he restored the captives with great presents.⁴² But the delicate emotions of cultivated sentiment could not operate on the furious ambition of a sea-king, who subsisted by his army and his ravages. If he could not conquer a territorial settlement, he must pirate or perish. His friendship, therefore, did not survive his fear; nor were the promises he made to quit the kingdom performed; on the contrary, as soon as he had disembarked on Essex, instead of quitting the island, he prepared for new aggressions. His friends at Mersey, hearing of his arrival, joined him on the coast.

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ALARMED into caution, by the skill of Alfred, he built a strong fortification at Benfleet, and from this sent out powerful detachments to forage and devastate. The acquisition of provisions was as necessary as, from the precautionary measures of Alfred, it was difficult. The country was no longer open to incursions

⁴² Sax. Chron. 94. Alfred and his son-in-law, Ethered, stood sponsors. Flor. 331.

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as formerly; a regular communication of defence, and a vigilant armed peasantry, directed by able men, secured the property of the country, and straitened the supplies of the invader. Hastings had to conquer, before he could subsist.

FROM his strong hold at Benfleet, Hastings marched with a portion of his united army to spread his depredations through Mercia. This excursion was fortunate for Alfred. The troops which he had allotted to act against the enemy in Mersey proceeded through London, and were joined by the warlike citizens. While Hastings was abroad, the Anglo-Saxons attacked those who remained in the entrenchment; forced their defence, threw them into complete confusion, and again carried away their wealth, women, and children, to London. Of the ships which lay under the protection of the fort, they broke up some, burnt others, and sailed with the rest to London and Rochester.⁴³

THE wife and children of Hastings were again sent to Alfred. The king was strongly urged to put them to death, as an act of vengeance for the perfidy and cruelty of Hastings; but Alfred's nobler mind consulted only its generosity, and with that benevolent magnanimity so rare, not only in barbarous ages, but in civilised war, and yet which sheds new glory round the illustrious character who displays it, he

⁴³ Sax. Chron. 94.

loaded them with presents, and again sent them free to his rival.⁴⁴ CHAP.
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DURING these transactions, Alfred had reached Exeter with so much expedition, that the invaders, disconcerted by his unexpected presence, raised the siege of the town with precipitation, hastened to their ships, and committed themselves once more to the chance of the ocean. On their return round the southern shore, they attacked Chichester, on the coast of Sussex; but the brave citizens repulsed them to the sea, slaying many hundreds, and taking some ships.⁴⁵

BEFORE Alfred could return from Devonshire, Hastings had collected again his defeated army, and, keeping still on the sea-coast, where he might receive the supplies he needed, he erected a strong fortress at South Shobery, near the south-eastern point of Essex: there he was joined by numbers from Northumbria and East Anglia, and by another descendant from Ragnar Lodbrog.⁴⁶ Confident from his numbers, and

⁴⁴ Sax. Chron. 94. Matt. West. 347. Flor. 331.

⁴⁵ Sax. Chron. 94. 96. Flor. 331.

⁴⁶ Ethelwerd mentions that Sigefert came to him with a powerful fleet from Northumbria, p. 847. The Annals of Ulster, p. 65., mention Sigfred, the son of Ingwar, as roaming about the British isles at this period. Ethelwerd notices the death of Guthfred, king of Northumbria at this time, and his burial at York, p. 847. As Sigfred is stated, in the Ulster Annals, to have killed his brother Godfred about this period, p. 65., they are probably the Sigefert and Guthfred of Ethelwerd.

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dissatisfied with his frustrated plan of defensive settlement, he appears to have adopted a new scheme of operations, in which, rapid enterprise was the predominant feature.

HASTINGS sailed up the Thames into the heart of the king's dominions, and spread his forces over Mercia.⁴⁷ By this intrepid measure, he had often scattered terror through France, and enriched himself with booty.

HE proceeded through Mercia to the Severn. But his presence roused to their duty the military commanders of every district which he traversed. Ethered, the governor of Mercia, two other aldermen, and the king's thanes, who were residing in the strong holds which he had erected, summoned the people of every borough from the east of Pedridan, the west of Selwood, and the east and north of the Thames, to the west of the Severn, with some portion of the North Welsh. The willing citizens united to protect their families and their property. Alfred advanced to join them, pursued the bold invaders to Buttington, on the Severn, and besieged them in their fortress, both by land and on the river.

SURROUNDED by the hostility of the country, and without shipping, they were obliged to submit to the blockade. They were lodged on both banks of the Severn, and they remained confined

⁴⁷ Ethelwerd says he extended his ravages to Stamford, between the Weolod and the thick wood called Ceoftefne, p. 847.

to their post for several weeks, enduring every extremity of distress. They killed a great part of their horses for their subsistence, and yet many perished by famine.⁴⁸

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THE success with which the generals of Alfred, and their hasty levies, compelled such a spirit as that of Hastings to submit to a calamitous confinement, announces highly the energy and wisdom of the regulations by which Alfred had provided for the defence of his people.

ROUSED by their sufferings, the Northmen attempted to burst from their prison. They threw themselves upon the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied the eastern part of the blockade, and an ardent conflict ensued, in which several royal thanes perished; the Northmen were repulsed, many drowned, and some thousands were slain; but the rest effected their escape. These went directly forwards to Essex, and reached their entrenchments, and the ships they had abandoned, without further molestation.⁴⁹

ALTHOUGH their bold enterprise, which had carried devastation into the center of England, had ended in disaster, yet their spirit of adventure was not quelled. They were educated to exist with the most excited and most pleasurable vitality in the tempests of war, and no failure deterred them, because, having no homes but their ships, or a conquered country, no profession

⁴⁸ Sax. Chron. 95. M. West. 348.

⁴⁹ Sax. Chron. 95. Florence, 332.

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but piracy, no provisions but their spoils, they had no chances of enjoyment, or even of existence, but from the battle. It was dreadful to have such an enemy to encounter, who must gain his point or perish; because there is a vivaciousness in his despair, which no danger can intimidate, no defeat, less than total annihilation, can destroy. He must act offensively while he lives. Desperate, and therefore fearless, he delights to multiply contests, because every encounter, presenting a possibility of success, is to him an advantage, and to his opponent a peril.

THE ruined bands of Hastings were in this situation when they regained their station in Essex. He might have manned his vessels, and sought the smiles of fortune on more prosperous shores; but wherever he went he must extort subsistence from plunder, and win his fortune with his sword. England had charms which overbalanced the discouragement of his discomfiture; and he resolved to wrestle with Alfred for the sceptre again.⁵⁰

BEFORE the winter came on Hastings had raised a large army from the East Anglians and Northumbrians. Their wives, their shipping, and their wealth, they confided to the East

⁵⁰ Hastings is thus far distinctly mentioned. M. Westm. states him to have led the Northmen from Benfleet to the Severn, p. 347, 348., and carries on the history of the same army to Cwatbridge, 349. Hence there can be no doubt that he was still the chief leader.

Anglians, and marching with that vigorous rapidity from which Hastings and the Northmen had so often derived their surest advantages, they rested neither night nor day till they had reached and fortified Chester in the Wirall.⁵¹ Alfred was active to pursue, but he did not overtake them till they had surrounded themselves with fortifications, which the military knowledge of that day respected as impregnable. Alfred, for two days, besieged them, drove away all the cattle in the vicinity, slew every enemy who ventured beyond the encampment, and burnt and consumed all the corn of the district.⁵²

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FROM Chester, Hastings led his bands for subsistence into North Wales: he plundered, and then quitted it, with his booty; but not daring to molest West Saxony, or Mercia, where the troops of Alfred were watching his progress, he made a circuit through Northumbria and East Anglia, and proceeded till he

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⁵¹ Spelman, who, in his *Life of Alfred*, is generally accurate, construed *Lega-ceaster* to mean *Leicester*, but this town is spelt with an *r* before *ceaster*, as *Legerceaster*, *Legraceaster*. *Sax. Chron.* 25. and 106. The *Wirall* is thus described by *Camden*: "From the city (*Chester*) there runneth out a Chersonese into the sea, inclosed on one side with the æstuary *Dee*, and on the other with the river *Mersey*; we call it *Wirall*; the *Welsh*, because it is a corner, *Killgury*. This was all heretofore a desolate forest, and not inhabited (as the natives say); but *King Edward* disforested it. Now it is well furnished with towns." *Brit. Chesh.*

⁵² *Sax. Chron.* 95.

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reached Mersey, in Essex. He seems to have always made this a favourite point of retreat or rallying. It was favourable for the junction of other adventurers, and it seems to have been his wish to have founded a little kingdom here. Before the winter, he drew his ships from the Thames up the Lea.⁵³

To protect their fleet, they built a fortress on the Lea, twenty miles above London. This distance suits either Ware or Hartford.⁵⁴ To have maintained this position would have been to have secured the establishment they wished in Essex. In the summer, a great number of the citizens of London, and many from its neighbourhood, attacked the Danish strong hold; but the Northmen repulsed them with the loss of four king's thanes. This disaster required the presence and ability of Alfred to repair. In autumn he encamped near the discomfited city, at the time when the harvest ripened, that the invaders might not deprive the Londoners of their subsistence. One day, the king musing on some decisive blow against his pertinacious enemy, rode to the river, and conceived the practicability of a plan of so affecting the stream, that the ships might be prevented from coming

⁵³ Flor. Wig. 333. The Lea (Ligan) is the little river which divides Essex from Middlesex, as the Stour separates it from Suffolk, and the Stort from Hartfordshire.

⁵⁴ Camden mentions Ware; Spelman, Hartford.

out. He executed his skilful project. By digging three new channels below, he drew off so much water as to leave the ships aground⁵⁵; and to protect his new works, he built a castle on each side of the river, and encamped in the vicinity.

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FINDING that they could not get out their ships, the Northmen abandoned them, and, desirous to escape from the nets of destruction with which the active mind of Alfred was encompassing them, they had again recourse to that celerity of movement which had so often rescued them from impending ruin. Sending their wives to their countrymen in East⁵⁶ Anglia, they suddenly broke up from their entrenchments at night, and, outflying Alfred, they again traversed Mercia, from the Lea to the Severn, and settling themselves at Bridgnorth⁵⁷, they

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⁵⁵ I insert this account on the authority of Huntingdon, because his statement is adopted by Camden and Spelman. The Saxon Chronicle and Florence imply, that Alfred made the Danish ships useless by obstructions, by building two works (ge-weorc S. C. obstructuram F.) below the part where the vessels lay.

⁵⁶ Flor. Wig. 334. Sax. Chron. 97.

⁵⁷ The Saxon Ch. says, Cƿatbƿicge bæ Seƿepn, 97. The ancient name of Bridgnorth in the Saxon annals is Bƿicge, and in ancient records it is called Bridge. Two towns near it are called Quatford and Quat, which is a fact, implying that Cwatbridge should not be far off. Gibson's add. to Camden, 552. Spelman placed it in this part, p. 88. Camden and Somner sought for it at Cambridge, and in Gloucestershire, which is less probable. M. West. spells it Quantebrige, p. 349.

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defended their encampments, as usual, by an immediate fortification.

THE idea of always protecting their positions by military defences, and the facility with which they raised such as Alfred dared not assault, augur favourably of the warlike knowledge of the invaders, or of their veteran chieftain.

THE army of Alfred followed Hastings to the Severn, but respected his entrenchments so highly as to permit him to pass the winter unmolested. In the meantime, the citizens of London seized the ships on the Lea; such as they could bring away were carried to London, with their contents; the others were destroyed.

For three years had Hastings, undismayed, contended against Alfred⁵⁸; and, notwithstanding the power, skill, and victories of the West Saxon king, had always recruited his losses, and maintained his invasion; but his spirit now began to bend under the genius of his master. All that energy and valour, and labour, could effect, he had used in vain. He had, as the Saxon Chronicle intimates, made great devastations, and weakened the English nation, by the destruction of much of its population, but he had not “broken it up.” Hastings therefore at

⁵⁸ The Saxon Chronicle says, “This was about the third year since they came hither, over the sea to Limene-mouth,” p. 97.; thus expressing that the invaders at Cwatbridge were the same who had come from Boulogne.

last yielded indignantly to his evil fortune. The Northmen now disbanded; some withdrew to East Anglia, some to Northumbria. They who had no resources to expect from these regions, made ships; and, stimulated by want, crossed the ocean, and attempted plunder on the Seine.⁵⁹

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ONE feeble attempt terminated this invasion, which must have been prodigal of human life. The depredators, who had retired beyond the Humber and the Ouse, embarked in long, well-constructed ships, to revenge themselves by piracy on the coast of Wessex. But even through the ocean the genius of Alfred pursued them. He was skilled in domestic architecture; and he applied his talents to the

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⁵⁹ Sax. Chron. 97. Flor. Wig. 334. Hastings is not mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle by name as having accompanied these, because the Chronicles rarely mention the king or chiefs of the Northmen. Hence it was with some trouble that I have been enabled to trace a connected history of his warfare against Alfred. But the fact in our chroniclers of part of the army he had acted with going afterwards to the Seine, suits the intimation in the French Chronicles, that he obtained at last a settlement there. See further note 63. Since the above remarks were written, I perceive a passage in the Annals of Asser, which justifies our ascribing the incidents of this long-contested invasion to Hastings, and which distinctly states him to have begun it, and to have retired with the army to the Seine, 895. *Hastængus cum exercitibus sibi adhærentibus, tertio anno postquam venerunt in Ostium Tamensis, et in ostium fluminis, mare transiit, sine lucro et sine honore, sed multis perditis ex sociis suis applicuit in ostium Sequanæ fluminis, p. 172.*

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improvement of his ships: he caused vessels to be built against the Northmen, full-nigh twice as long as theirs, swifter, higher, and less unsteady. In some he put sixty rowers, in others more. They were neither like Frisian nor Danish ships, which then excelled all others in Europe. They were made on that plan which the judgment of Alfred, enlightened by his knowledge and experience, discerned to be more useful than either.⁶⁰ Six Danish vessels ravaged the Isle of Wight and Devonshire, and the intervening coast. The king ordered nine ships of his new naval architecture, manned with Frisians and English to pursue them; with the orders to take alive all they could.⁶¹ The king's fleet found the Northmen's six near the shore; three of these were aground, the other three went out and endured the combat: two were taken; the third escaped with only five men. The conquering English sailed to the bay, where the others were detained; but the inconstant waters betrayed them into peril. The unexpected retreat of the waves separated the Eng-

⁶⁰ This important passage deserves to be transcribed, in its original language: "Tha het Ælfrēð cýnnꝰ tumbrian lange ſcipu ongen tha ærcar. Tha pæron ful neah tpa ſpa lange ſpa tha othpu. Sume hæfðon 60 apa, ſume ma. Tha pæron ægðer 7e ſpiftan, 7e unpealtan, 7e eac hypan thonne tha othpu. Næpon hie napðer ne on Fpeſiſc 7eſcæpene ne on Dæniſc bute ſpa him ſelfum thuhte, thæt hie nýtſpethorfe beon meahton." Sax. Chron. 98.

⁶¹ Fl. Wig. 335.

lish fleet into two portions; one, consisting of three ships, remained fixed close by the enemy, the rest were kept asunder on another part, and could not move to the support of their friends. The wary Danes embraced the opportunity, and attacked the three ships which the waters had placed near them. Lucumon, the king's gerefa, perished, with Æthelferth, his geneat or herdsman, three Frisian chiefs, and sixty-two of the crew. Of the Danes, 120 fell. The battle seems to have been indecisive; but the tide first releasing the Danish ships, they sailed into the ocean. They were, however, so injured, that two were afterwards cast on the English shore, and their crews were ordered by Alfred to execution. The same year, twenty more of their ships were taken, and the men were punished as pirates.⁶²

THUS terminated the formidable attempt of Hastings. As far as we can distinguish the last incidents of his life, he returned to France, and obtained from the king the gift of some territory, where he passed the remainder of his life in peaceful privacy.⁶³ His memory was ho-

⁶² Sax. Chron. 99. Flor. Wig. 335.

⁶³ *Hastings vero Karolum Francorum regem adiens, pacem petiit, quam adipiscens, urbem Carnotensem stipendii munere ab ipso accepit.* Wil. Gem. 221. He is mentioned for the last time on Rollo's invasion and acquisition of Normandy, as residing at this place. Ibid. p. 228.; and Dudo, p. 76.

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noured by the encomium of a warrior, in a future age, whose invasion of England was successful, but who had not to encounter the abilities of an Alfred.⁶⁴ The defence of England against Hastings was a greater evidence of Alfred's military talents than his triumph over the armies which had harassed the first part of his reign.

NOTWITHSTANDING the vigilance and ability of Alfred, it was impossible that such a dangerous contest could have existed without great detriment to his people.⁶⁵ The ravages and depopulation caused by Hastings and his associates, in their persisting invasion and extensive movements, are spoken of very strongly by the Chroniclers. But the miseries of this warfare were exceeded by the dreadful calamity which attended its conclusion. A pestilence which raged for three years filled the nation

⁶⁴ William the Conqueror, in his address to his troops, as stated by Bromton, says, "Quid potuit rex Francorum bellis proficere cum omni gente quæ est a Lotaringia usque ad Hispaniam contra Hasting antecessorem vestrum, qui sibi quantum de Francia voluit acquisivit, quantum voluit regi permisit, dum placuit tenuit, dum sauciatus est ad majora anelans reliquit?" p. 959.

⁶⁵ The exclamation of the monk of Worcester is forcible: "O quam crebris vexationibus, quam gravibus laboribus, quam diris et lamentalibus modis, non solum a Danis, qui partes Angliæ tunc temporis occupaverant, verum etiam ab his Satanæ filiis tota vexata est Anglia," p. 334. Matt. West. has copied it, p. 348.

with death; even the highest ranks were thinned by its destruction.⁶⁶

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THE sovereignty of Alfred was not only established over the Anglo-Saxons⁶⁷, but even the Cymry in Wales acknowledged his power, and sought his alliance. The rest of his life was tranquil. He continued to prosecute all his plans for the improvement of his shipping and the defence and education of his kingdom. His reputation increased with his life. All sought his friendship, and none in vain. He gave land and money to those who desired them, and his personal friendship to those who aspired to it. All experienced that love, vigilance, and protection, with which the king defended himself, and those attached to him.⁶⁸ But at last the progress of human destiny deprived the world of its then most beneficent luminary. After a life of the most active utility, he was taken from the world, on the 26th day of October, in the year 900, or 901.⁶⁹ His great character has

⁶⁶ Some of the noblemen who perished are named in Sax. Chron. p. 97.; and Flor. Wig. 335.

⁶⁷ In 836 Alfred besieged London (Ethelw. 846), rebuilt it with honour, made it habitable, and subjected it to Ethelred's dominion. It is added, that all the Anglo-Saxons, not under the dominion of the Danes, submitted to Alfred. Flor. Wig. 322. Sax. Chron. 88.

⁶⁸ Asser, 50.

⁶⁹ The year of his death is variously given. Matt. West. 350.; Ing. 28.; and Rad. Dic. 452.; place it in 900. The Sax. Chron. 99.; Malms. 46.; Mailros, 146.; Florence, 336.; Petrib. Ch. 2.; affix it to the year 901. So Hen. Silgrave, MSS. Cleop. A. 12., and others.

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been praised by many⁷⁰, but by none more than it has merited. Its best panegyric will be an impartial consideration of it, under three divisions, of his intellectual, moral, and political exertions.

⁷⁰ Alfred has been highly extolled by foreigners. The following extracts show the opinions of a Frenchman and German on his character: — Je ne sçais s'il y a jamais eu sur la terre un homme plus digne des respects de la postérité qu' Alfred le grand, qui rendit ces services à sa patrie supposé que tout ce qu'on raconte de lui soit véritable. Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, vol. xvi. c. 26. p. 473. ed. 1785. — " But as the greatest minds display themselves in the most turbulent storms on the call of necessity, so England has to boast, among others, her Alfred; a pattern for kings in a time of extremity, a bright star in the history of mankind. Living a century after Charlemagne, he was, perhaps, a greater man in a circle happily more limited." Herder's *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, p. 547, 548. The celebrated Mirabeau, in a *Discours Préliminaire*, published under his name, to a translation of Mrs. Macauley's history, with a liberality that does him credit, draws a parallel between Alfred and Charlemagne, and gives the superiority to the Anglo-Saxon.

BOOK V.

CHAP. I.

ALFRED's intellectual Character.—State of the ANGLO-SAXON Mind.—Illiteracy of its Clergy.—ALFRED's Self-education.—His subsequent Instructors.—His Invitation of ASSER and of GRIMBALD.—His Attainment of the LATIN Language.—His Preface to GREGORY's Pastorals.

THE incidents which principally contributed to excite Alfred's infant mind into activity¹, and to give it ideas, more varied and numerous, than childhood usually obtains, have

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I.

¹ Alfred had the felicity of possessing a literary friend, Asser, of Saint David's, who composed some biographical sketches of his great master's life and manners. His work is somewhat rude and incomplete; but it is estimable for its apparent candour and unaffected simplicity. It is the effusion of a sensible, honest, observing mind. The information which it conveys has never been contradicted, and harmonises with every other history or tradition, that has been preserved concerning Alfred. The merits of Alfred, therefore, are supported by a degree of evidence which seldom attends the characters of ancient days. But we shall be able to exhibit him in this edition still more satisfactorily, in his own words from his own works.

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been noticed in the preceding pages ; as well as the fact, that he was passing the first twelve years of his life without any education.² But although thus neglected, his intellectual faculty was too powerful to be indolent, or to be contented with the illiterate pursuits which were the fashion of the day. It turned, from its own energies and sympathies, towards mental cultivation ; and attached itself to that species of it, which, without the aid of others, it could by its own industry obtain. This was the Saxon popular poetry. In all the nations of the north, whether from the Keltic or Teutonic stock, persons were continually emerging, who pursued the art of arranging words into metrical composition, and of applying this arrangement to express their own feelings, or to perpetuate the favourite subjects of their contemporaries or patrons. By this verbal rhythm, however imperfect ; by the emotions which it breathed or caused ; or by the themes with which it has been connected, the rudest minds, that have been most adverse to literature, have been always found to be impressible. Hence, before Alfred's birth, Saxon poems had been written ; and, in the court of his father and brothers, there were men who were fond of repeating them. Wherever they were recited, either by day or night, Alfred is recorded to have been, before he could read,

² See page 9. of this volume. Asser, 16. Malmsb. 45. Jam duodenis omnis literaturæ experts fuit.

an eager auditor, and was industrious to commit them to his memory.³ This fondness for poetry continued with him through life. It was always one of his principal pleasures to learn Saxon poems, and to teach them to others⁴; and we have specimens of his own efforts to compose them, in his translation of the metres of Boetius. The memory of his children was also chiefly exercised in this captivating art.⁵ It had a powerful effect on Alfred's mind: it kindled a desire of being sung and celebrated himself: it created a wish for further knowledge; and began a taste for intellectual compositions. The muses have in every age had these effects.

³ Sed Saxonica poemata die noctuque solers auditor relatu aliorum sæpissime audiens, docibilis memoriter retinebat. Asser, 16.

⁴ Et maxime carmina Saxonica memoriter discere, aliis imperare. Asser, 43. Many princes were at this period fond of poetry. Eginhard mentions of Charlemagne, that he transcribed and learnt the *barbara et antiquissima carmina quibus veterum regum actus et bella canebantur*, p. 11. In 844 died Abdalla, son of Taher, a Persian king, in Chorasán, who composed some Arabic poems, and was celebrated for his talents in many elegies, by the poets who survived him. Mirchond, *Hist. Reg. Pers.* p. 9. In 862, Mustansir Billa, the caliph of the Saracens, died by poison; he wrote verses of which Elmacin has preserved two. *Hist. Sarac.* c. xii. p. 154. Wacic, the caliph, who died 845, was a poet. Elmacin cites some of his verses. His dying words were, "O thou, whose kingdom never passes away, pity one whose dignity is so transient," *ib.* His successor, Mutewakel, was also poetical.

⁵ Et maxime Saxonica carmina studiose dedicere et frequentissime libris utuntur. Asser, 43.

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Their lays have always been found to be most captivating and most exciting to the young mind. They are the most comprehensible form of lettered intellect; and being, in their rudest state, the effusions of the feelings of the day, they excite congenial feelings in those who hear and read them. Poetry is sympathy addressing sympathy; and, if its subjects were but worthy of its excellences, it would lead the human mind to every attainable perfection. Alfred, though young, felt forcibly its silent appeal to the noble nature that lived within him; and when his mother promised the book of poems, already mentioned, to her son, who could read it, he sought an instructor, and never ceased his exertions till he had enabled himself to read.⁶

State of
the Anglo-
Saxon
mind.

THE merit of Alfred in voluntarily attaining this important, though now infant art, was more peculiar, because not only his royal brothers, and most, if not all, of the contemporary kings were without it; but even that venerated class of the nation, in whom the largest part of the learning of their age usually concentrates, was, in general, ignorant of it. Such facts induce us to consider our ancestors with too much contempt. But we may recollect that literature was not despised by them from want of natural talent, or from intellectual torpidity. Their minds were vigorous, and in great and continual

⁶ Asser, 16. Malmsb. 48.

exertion; but the exertion was confined within the horizon, and directed to the objects, around them. The ancient world stood, in its recording memorials, like an unknown continent before them, shrouded from their sight by its clouds and distance, and kept so by their belief of its inutility. It was too unlike their own world, and too little connected with their immediate pursuits, for them to value or explore. They did not want its remains for their jurisprudence; their landed property; the rules of their nobility and feudal rights; their municipal institutions; their religion; their morals; their internal traffic, manners, amusements, or favourite pursuits. On most of these points, and in their legislative assemblies and laws, as well as in their private and public wars, they were so dissimilar to the Greeks and Romans, that the classical authors were as unserviceable to them as those of the Chinese are to us. Hence, although a magician had offered them a fairy wand, by which, at their own pleasure, they could have transported themselves to the busy streets of Athens or Rome, to have heard Demosthenes harangue, or Socrates teach, or Cato censure; or to have made all the past ages live again before their sight, with all their applauded characters, they would not have welcomed the stupendous gift; not from mere ignorance or stupidity, but because it would not have suited their wants, nor have promoted their interests. Classical

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literature could have then been only a subject of speculative curiosity, inapplicable to any of their worldly pursuits, and rather impeding than assisting the devotion of their monasteries. For their religion and morals they had higher sources in their revered Scriptures; and for their rites and ceremonies they had sufficient teachers, occasionally from Rome, and generally in their native clergy. To these indeed, a small portion of Latin was necessary, for the correct reading and due understanding of their breviaries. But to the rest of society it was not more practically essential than the scientific astronomy of a Newton or La Place to ourselves. It would have improved their minds, and enlarged their knowledge, and produced beneficial effects; but all the daily business of their lives could be, and was, very ably transacted without it. Hence the intellects of our ancestors are no more to be impeached for their ignorance of classical literature, than ours are for the absence of that great mass of discoveries and improvements, which we hope that a few more centuries will add to the stock we now possess. There is indeed no convincing evidence, that the Anglo-Saxon public were much more deficient in the art or habit of reading, than the public of the Roman empire, whom the Gothic nations subdued. We too gratuitously ascribe a literary cultivation to the Grecian and Roman population. But we must not take the writers in the

Latin language that have survived to us, as the general samples of their contemporaries. The more this subject is studied, the more clearly it will be perceived, that there was less difference between the intellectual state of the mass of the people before and after the Gothic irruptions than has been usually supposed. It is the art of printing which has created that vast distinction, in this respect, which we now observe, and in which we so justly exult; and yet, until lately, how many, even amongst ourselves, have passed through life, not unreputably, without that instruction, for the absence of which our predecessors have been so strongly arraigned!

BUT in this state, even before increased wealth and population had given to some part of society, both leisure and desire for objects of mere intellectual curiosity, a few soaring minds occasionally emerged among the Anglo-Saxons, who became inquisitive beyond the precincts of their day. One of these was Alfred. Led by the encouragement of his step-mother to attain the art of reading, it was happy for his country that he endeavoured to pursue it. If he had not made this acquisition, he would have been no more than many of the race of Cerdic had been before him. But the love of study arising within him, and gradually bringing to his view the anterior ages of human history, and all their immortalised characters, the spark of moral emulation kindled within him; he strove for

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virtues which he could not else have conceived; he aspired to the fame which only these will bestow; and became a model of wisdom and excellence himself, for other generations to resemble. In no instance has an immortal renown been more clearly the result of literary cultivation, than in our venerated Alfred. It was his intellectual improvement which raised him from a half-barbaric Saxon to an high-minded, patriotic, and benevolent sage, whose wisdom, as will be presently shown, still lives to instruct and interest even an age so superior as our own.

BUT the Anglo-Saxon poetry, to which Alfred first directed his application, was but scanty and barren, and must have been soon exhausted. To gratify his increasing intellectual propensities, he had to go far beyond his contemporaries, and to become himself the architect of his knowledge. Modern education deprives modern men of this merit, because all parents are at present anxious to have their children taught whatever it is honourable to know. To be intelligent now is even more necessary than to be affluent, because Mind has become the invisible sovereign of the world, and they who cultivate its progress, being diffused every where in society, are the tutors of the human race; they dictate the opinions, they fashion the conduct of all men. To be illiterate, or to be imbecil, in this illumined day, is to be despised and trodden down in that tumultuous struggle

for wealth, power, or reputation, in which every individual is too eagerly conflicting. In the days of Alfred, the intellect was a faculty which no one considered distinct from the pursuits of life, and therefore few thought of cultivating it separately from them, or even knew that they possessed it as a distinct property of their nature. CHAP.
I.

It is difficult to conceive how much even churchmen partook of the most gross ignorance of the times: "Very few were they," says Alfred, "on this side the Humber (the most improved parts of England) who could understand their daily prayers in English, or translate any letter from the Latin. I think there were not many beyond the Humber; they were so few, that I indeed cannot recollect *one single instance* on the south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom."⁷ On less authority than his own, we could hardly believe such a general illiteracy among the clergy, even of that day; it is so contrary to all our present experience. The earls, governors, and servants of Alfred, were as uninformed. When the king's wise severity afterwards compelled them to study reading and

⁷ Spilthe feape pæron behionan Dumbre the hiora thenunga cūthen understandan on Engliſc oððe fupthum an æpendgeppit of Lædene on Engliſc aſpeccan and ic pene thæt te nauht monige bezeondan Dumbre næpen: ƿpa feape hiora pæron thætte ic fupthum anne anlepne ne mæg Ʒethencean be futhan Temeſe tha tha ic to ƿuce fenz. Alfred's Preface, p. 82. Wiſe's Aſſer.

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literature, or to be degraded, they lamented that in their youth they had not been instructed; they thought their children happy who could be taught the liberal arts, and mourned their own misfortune, who had not learnt in their youth; because in advanced life they felt themselves too old to acquire what Alfred's commands imposed as a duty, and by his example, had made a wish.⁸

Alfred's
self-education.

WHEN Alfred began his own education, he had not only to find the stimulus in himself, to cherish it in opposition to the prejudices and practice of his countrymen, and to search out his own means, but he had also to struggle against difficulties which would have extinguished the infant desire in a mind of less energy. His principal obstacle was the want of instructors. "What," says his friend, who happily for posterity has made us acquainted with the private feelings as well as public pursuits of this noble-minded sovereign, "what of all his troubles and difficulties, he affirmed with frequent complaint and the deep lamentations of his heart, to have been the greatest, was, that when he had the age, permission, and ability to learn, he could find no masters."⁹ When Alfred had attained the age of maturity, and, by the dignity to which he succeeded, had gained the means of obtaining instruction, he was almost

⁸ Asser, 71.

⁹ Ibid. 17.

disabled from profiting by the advantage. A CHAP. I.
disease, his daily and nightly tormentor, which
his physicians could neither remedy nor explore;
the duties and anxieties inseparable from his
royal station; the fierce aggressions of the North-
men, which on sea and land demanded his pre-
sence and exertions, so afflicted and consumed
his future life, that though he got a few masters
and writers, he was unable to enjoy their
tuition.¹⁰ It is admirable to see, that not-
withstanding impediments, which to most would
have been insuperable, Alfred persevered in his
pursuit of improvement. The desire of know-
ledge, that inborn instinct of the truly great,
which no gratifications could saturate, no ob-
stacles discourage, never left him but with ¹¹ life.
If Alfred succeeded in his mental cultivation,
who should despair?

It has been already hinted, that the Anglo-
Saxon language had been at this period very
little applied to the purposes of literature. In
their vernacular tongue, Cedmon and Aldhelm
had sung, but almost all the learning of the
nation was clothed in the Latin phrase. Bede
had in this composed his history, and his multi-
farious treatises on chronology, grammar, rhe-
toric, and other subjects of erudition. The other
lettered monks of that day, also expressed them-
selves in the language, though not with the

¹⁰ Asser, 17.¹¹ Ibid.

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eloquence of Cicero. In the same tongue the polished Alcuin expressed all the effusions of his cultivated mind. The immortalised classics had not been as yet familiarised to our ancestors by translations; he therefore, who knew not Latin, could not know much.

FROM the period of his father's death in 858, to his accession in 871, Alfred had no opportunity of procuring that knowledge which he coveted. Such feelings as his could not be cherished by elder brothers, who were unacquainted with them, or by a nation who despised them. When he verged towards manhood he was still unable to obtain instructors, because his influence was small and his patrimony was withheld.¹² The hostilities of the Northmen augmented every obstacle: on every occasion they burnt the books which the Anglo-Saxons had collected, and destroyed the men who could use them, in their promiscuous persecution of the Christian clergy. Their presence also compelled Alfred repeatedly into the martial field, and from these united causes his ardent thirst for knowledge remained ungratified, until the

¹² Alfred details the particulars in his will: he says, that Ethelwulf left his inheritance to Ethelbald, Ethelred, and Alfred, and to the survivor of them; and that on Ethelbald's death, Ethelred and Alfred gave it to Ethelbert their brother, on condition of receiving it again at his decease; when Ethelred acceded, Alfred requested of him, before all the nobles, to divide the inheritance, that Alfred might have his share, but Ethelred refused.

possession of the crown invested him with the wealth and influence of the West-Saxon kings. CHAP.
I.

BUT on receiving the crown, he exerted himself to remove the ignorance of divine and human learning, which he had been so long lamenting in himself. He sent at various intervals to every part, abroad and at home, for instructors capable of translating the learned languages. Like the sagacious bee, says his honoured friend, which, springing in the dawn of summer from its beloved cells, wheels its swift flight through the trackless air, descends on the shrubs and flowers of vegetable nature, selects what it prefers, and brings home the grateful load; so Alfred, directing afar his intellectual eye, sought elsewhere for the treasure which his own kingdom did not afford.¹³

HIS first acquisitions were, Werfrith, the bishop of Worcester, a man skilled in the Scriptures; Plegmund, a Mercian, who was made archbishop of Canterbury, a wise and venerable man; Ethelstan and Werwulf, also Mercians, and priests. He invited them to his court, and endowed them munificently with promotions; and by their incessant exertions, the studious passion of Alfred was appeased. By day and by night, whenever he could create leisure to listen, they recited or interpreted to him the books he commanded; he was never without

Alfred's
subsequent
instructors.

¹³ Asser, p. 45.

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V.

one of them near him : and by this indefatigable application, though he could not himself understand the learned languages as yet, he obtained a general knowledge of all that books contained.¹⁴

THE information which the king acquired, rather disclosed him the vast repositories of knowledge, of which he was ignorant, than satisfied him with its attainment. The more he knew, the more tuition he craved. He sent ambassadors over the sea into France, to inquire for teachers there. He obtained from that country, Grimbold, the priest and monk, who had treated him kindly in his journies, and who is described as a respected man, learned in the writings he revered, adorned with every moral excellence, and skilled in vocal music. He obtained another literary friend, of talents and acquisitions much superior, and indeed worthy of Alfred's society. This was Johannes Erigena, or John the Irishman, a monk of most penetrating intellect, acquainted with all the treasures of literature, versed in many languages, and accomplished in many other arts. By these acquisitions the mind of Alfred was greatly expanded and enriched, and he rewarded their friendship with princely liberality.¹⁵

THE merit of Asser also reached the king's ear, which was open to every rumour of extraordinary merit.

¹⁴ Asser, p. 46.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 46, 47.

“ I was called by the king,” says this plain, but interesting biographer, “ from the western extremities of Wales. I accompanied my conductors to Sussex, and first saw him in the royal city of Dene. I was benignantly received by him. Amongst other conversation, he asked me earnestly to devote myself to his service, and to become his companion. He requested me to leave all my preferments beyond the Severn, and he promised to compensate them to me by greater possessions.”¹⁶ Asser expressed an hesitation at quitting without necessity, and merely for profit, the places where he had been nourished, and taken orders. Alfred replied, “ If this will not suit you, accommodate me with at least half of your time. Be with me six months, and pass the rest in Wales.” Asser declined to engage himself till he had consulted his friends. The king condescended to repeat his solicitations, and Asser promised to return to him within half a year ; a day was fixed with a pledge for his visit ; and, on the fourth day of their interview, Asser quitted him to go home.¹⁷

CHAP.
I.
His invitation of
Asser.

A FEVER seized the Welshman at Winton, and continued to oppress him for a year.¹⁸ The king, not seeing him at the appointed day, sent letters to inquire into the cause of his tarrying, and to accelerate his journey. Asser, unable to

¹⁶ Asser, 47.¹⁷ Ibid. 47, 48.¹⁸ Ibid. 48.

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stir, wrote to acquaint him with the disease; but, on his recovery, he advised with his friends, and, on receiving their assent, he attached himself to Alfred for a moiety of every year. The clergy of St. David's expected that Alfred's friendship for Asser would preserve their patrimony from the depredations of Hemeid.¹⁹ "I was honourably received in the royal city of Leonaford," says Asser, "and that time staid eight months in his court. I translated and read to him whatever books he wished, which were within our reach; for it was his peculiar and perpetual custom, day and night, amidst all his other afflictions of mind and body, either to read books himself, or to have them read to him by others." Asser states the donations with which Alfred remunerated his attachment.²⁰ No eloquence can do more honour to any human

¹⁹ Asser, 49. Hemeid was one of the Welsh princes contiguous to St. David's.

²⁰ Asser, 50. On the morning of Christmas eve, when Asser was determining to visit Wales, the king gave him two writings, containing a list of the things which were in the two monasteries at Ambresbury, in Wiltshire, and Banwell, in Somerset. In the same day, Alfred gave him those two monasteries, and all that they contained, a silk pall, very precious, and as much incense as a strong man could carry; adding, that he did not give him these *trifles* as if he was unwilling to give him greater things. On Asser's next visit, the king gave him Exeter, with all the parish belonging to it in Saxony and Cornwall, besides innumerable daily gifts of all sorts of worldly wealth. He gave him immediate permission of riding to the two monasteries, and then of returning home, p. 50, 51.

character, than this unadorned narration. The CHAP.
condescension, benignity, the desire of improve- I.
ment, and the wise liberality of Alfred, are
qualities so estimable, as to ensure the vener-
ation of every reader.

THE manner of his obtaining the society of and of
Grimbald, was an evidence of the respect and
delicacy with which he treated those whom he
selected for his literary companions. He sent
an honourable embassy of bishops, presbyters,
deacons, and religious laymen, to Fulco, the
archbishop of Rheims, within whose district
Grimbald resided.²¹ He accompanied his mission
with munificent presents²², and his petition was,
that Grimbald might be permitted to leave his
functions in France, and to reside in England.
The ambassadors engaged for Alfred, that Grim-
bald should be treated with distinguished honour

²¹ Fulco's letter to Alfred on this subject is yet extant.
It is printed at the end of Wise's *Asser*, p. 123—129. He
says, p. 128., "*Eum ad vos mittendum cum suis electoribus
et cum nonnullis regni vestri proceribus vel optimatibus tam
episcopis scilicet, presbyteris Diaconibus, quam etiam reli-
giosis Laicis, &c.*" In p. 126., he starts a curious metaphor.
He says, "*Misistes siquidem nobis licet generosos et optimos
tamen corporales atque mortales canes.*" This rhetorical
metamorphosis is pursued for thirteen lines. These noble
dogs were to drive away the irreligious wolves; and, he says,
they came to desire some other dogs, not the dumb dogs
mentioned by the prophet, but good noisy dogs who could
bark heartily, "*Pro domino suo magnos latratus fundere.*"
One of these was Grimbald. Fulco may have strayed into
a joke, but he intended a serious compliment.

²² *Ibid.* p. 126.

BOOK

V.

during the rest of his life.²³ The archbishop, in his letter to Alfred, speaks highly of the king's administration of his government²⁴, and commends the merit of Grimbold.²⁵ Fulco adds, that it was with great personal pain, that he permitted him to be taken from France. The liberality of Alfred overcame his reluctance, and Grimbold became a companion of the king of Wessex.

IN 887, Alfred obtained the happiness he had long coveted, of reading the Latin authors in their original language. Asser has noted the date of the circumstance, and described its occurrence. As the monarch and his friend were sitting together, and, as usual, discoursing in the royal apartments, it happened that Asser made a quotation. The king was struck with it, and taking from his bosom his little book of devotion, he required that it might be inserted in it. Asser found no room in the little manual of his piety, and after some hesitation, calculated to increase his desire, proposed to put a few other leaves together, for the purpose of preserving any passages that might please the king. Alfred assented; the new book was made; the quotation was entered, and soon two more, as they occurred in the conversation. The king, pleased with the sentiments, began to translate them into Saxon. The book be-

²³ Fulco, p. 128.²⁴ Ibid. p. 123.²⁵ P. 127.

came full of diversified extracts. The first were from the Scriptures, others from all subjects. Alfred was delighted with his new talent; and the book became a perpetual companion, in which he declared he had no small recreation.²⁶

To John Erigena, to Grimbald, to Asser, and Plegmund, Alfred himself ascribes his acquisition of the Latin language.²⁷

HIS desire to improve his people was so ardent, that he had scarcely made the attainment before he was active to make it of public utility. He beheld his subjects ignorant and barbarous, and he wisely judged that he should best amend their condition by informing their minds. Let us hear his own mind giving voice to his patriotic and intelligent feelings.

HE first recalls to the mind of his correspondent, that even the Anglo-Saxons had once been more learned than he found them. "I wish thee to know that it comes very often into my mind what wise men there were in England, both laymen and ecclesiastics, and how happy those times were to England! how the kings, who then had the government of the people, obeyed God and his messengers! how they both pre-

Alfred's
preface.

²⁶ Asser, 56, 57. In quo non mediocre, sicut tunc aiebat, habebat solatium.

²⁷ Spe ƿe ic hie geleornode æt Plegmunðe, minum ærcebiſcepe; and æt Ælfric, mine biſcepe; and æt Grimbolde, minum meſſe ƿreofte; and æt Johanne, minum meſſe ƿreofte." Alfred's preface to his Gregory's Pastorals. Wise, p. 85.

BOOK V. served their peace, their customs, and their power at home, and increased their territory abroad, and how they prospered both in wisdom and in war! The sacred profession was diligent both to teach and to learn, and in all the offices which they should do to God. Men from abroad sought wisdom and learning hither in this country, though we now must go out of it to obtain knowledge, if we should wish to have it.”²⁸

THE king contrasts with this account the state of England in his time.

“ So clean was it fallen out of England, that there are very few on this side of the Humber who understand to say their prayers in English, or to translate any letter from Latin into English; and I know that there were not many beyond the Humber; so few were they, that I indeed cannot think of a single instance south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom.”

RECOLLECTING here the success of his own exertions, he exclaims, “ Thanks be to Almighty God, that we have now some teachers in our stalls !”²⁹

THE father of his people, and the benevolent man, appear strikingly in the expressions which he continues to use: “ Therefore I direct that you do, as I believe that you will, that you who have leisure for the things of this world, as often

²⁸ This preface is published by Wise, at the end of his life of Asser, from the Bodleian MSS. Jun. 53.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 82.

as you can, impart that wisdom which God has given you, wherever you can impart it. Think what punishments will come upon us from this world, if we shall have neither loved it ourselves, nor left it to others : we shall have had only the name of Christians, and very few of their proper habits.

CHAP.
I.

“ When I recollect all this, I also remember how I saw, before that every thing was ravaged and burnt, that the churches through all the English nation stood full of vessels and books, and also of a great many of the servants of God.”

THIS statement alludes to the times in which Bede flourished, and when Alcuin was educated ; but after that period the Saxon mind declined from its beginning literature. Other occupations occurred during the interval in which their oc-tarchy was passing into a monarchy, from the feuds and wars, and mutations of fortune which this political crisis occasioned, which the North-men’s invasions increased, and which monopolised their time, passions, and activity.

“ THEY knew very little of the use of their books, because they could not understand any thing in them, as these were not written in their own language, which they spoke. Our ancestors, that held these places before, loved wisdom, and through this they obtained abundance of it, and left it to us. Here we may yet see their treasures, though we are unable to

BOOK explore them; therefore we have now lost both
V. their wealth and their wisdom, because we have
 not been willing with our minds to tread in their
 steps.³⁰

“ WHEN I remembered all this, then I wondered greatly that of those good wise men who were formerly in our nation, and who had all learnt fully these books, none would translate any part into their own language; but I soon answered myself, and said, they never thought that men would be so reckless, and that learning would be so fallen. They intentionally omitted it, and wished that there should be more wisdom in the land, by many languages being known.

“ I THEN recollected how the law was first revealed in the Hebrew tongue, and that after the Greeks had learned it, they turned it all into their own language, and also other books; and the Latin men likewise, when they had learned it, they, by wise foreigners, turned it into their tongue; and also every other Christian nation translated some part.”³¹

THE wise, the active-minded, but unassuming king, proceeds modestly to say to the bishop he addresses, “ Therefore I think it better, if you think so, that we also translate some books, the most necessary for all men to know, into our own language, that we all may know them; and we may do this, with God’s help, very easily, if

³⁰ Wise, p. 83.

³¹ Ibid. p. 84.

we have stillness; so that all the youth that now are in England, who are free men, and have so much wealth as that they may satisfy themselves, be committed to learning, so that for a time they may apply to no other duty till they first well know to read English writing. Let them learn further the Latin language, they who will further learn, and will advance to a higher condition.”³²

“WHEN I remembered how the learning of the Latin tongue before this was fallen through the English nation, and yet many could read English, then began I, among much other manifold business of this kingdom, to turn into English the book named *Pastoralis*, or the Herdsman’s Book, sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense, so as I had learned of Plegmund, my archbishop; and of Asser, my bishop; of Grimbold, my mass priest; and of John, my mass priest; and as I understood and could most intellectually express it, I have turned it into English.”³³

³² Wise, p. 85.

³³ Ibid. He concludes with, “I will send one copy to every bishop’s seat in my kingdom; and on every one there shall be an *æstel* that shall be of fifty manscuses; and I intreat, in God’s name, that no man take the *æstel* from the book, nor the book from the minster. It is uncertain how long there may be learned bishops such as now, thank God, there are every where. Hence I wish that they should always be at these places, unless the bishops should desire to

BOOK
V.

WHAT a sublime, yet unostentatious, character appears to us in these artless effusions! A king, though in nation, age, and education, almost a barbarian himself, yet not merely calmly planning to raise his people from their ignorance, but amid anxiety, business, and disease, sitting down himself to level the obstacles by his own personal labour, and to lead them, by his own practice, to the improvements he wished!

WE proceed to notice the translations of Alfred. The preceding preface mentions his determination to translate some books. The life of St. Neot says, that he made many ³⁴ books. Malmsbury affirms, that he put into English a great part of the Roman compositions ³⁵; and the more ancient Ethelwerd declares, that the number of his versions was not known. ³⁶ The first of these, which we shall consider as the most expressive exhibition of his own genuine mind, is his translation of Boetius.

have it with them, or to lend it any where, or to write another from it." Ibid. p. 86. What the *æstel* meant that was to be so costly is not precisely known.

³⁴ "Eac is to witen tha se king Ælfrēd manega bæc thuph Lober gart gebyhte." Vita Sancti Neoti, p. 147. MSS. Cott. Vesp. D. 14.

³⁵ Malmsb. p. 45.

³⁶ Nam ex Latino rhetorico fasmate in propriam verterat linguam volumina, numero ignoto, &c. Ethelwerd, 847.

CHAP. II.

ALFRED'S *Translation of BOETIUS'S Consolations of Philosophy.*—ALFRED considered as a *Moral Essayist.*—*His Thoughts, Tales, and Dialogues on various Subjects.*

BOETIUS flourished at the close of the fifth century.¹ He was master of the offices to Theodoric, king of the Goths, who had the discernment to appreciate his intellectual acquisitions², but who at last destroyed him, from a political suspicion, in 524.³ While he was in prison on this charge, he wrote his celebrated book, *de Consolatione Philosophiæ*, whose object is to diminish the influence of riches, dignity, power, pleasure, or glory; and to prove their inadequacy to produce happiness.

CHAP.
II.

His translation of
Boetius.

HE fancies that philosophy visits him in prison, and, by expanding these views, reconciles his mind to the adversity he was suffering. The Author of existence is suggested to be the

¹ See Gibbon on the character, studies, honours, and death of Boetius, vol. iv. p. 33—39.

² The letter of Theodoric to Boetius, full of panegyric on his studies, yet exists among the *Ep. Cassiod. lib. i. ep. 45. p. 33.*

³ *Fab. Bib. Med. vol. i. p. 687.*

BOOK sovereign good ⁴, and all that the reasonings of
 { **V.** a Cicero could supply is adduced to show that
 worldly prosperity is, of itself, as inferior in value
 and comfort as it is uncertain in its duration,
 and capricious in its favours.

THE book of Boetius is praised by the Erigena, whom Alfred admitted into his friendship.⁵ That the king translated it is stated by Ethelwerd⁶, who was his kinsman, and almost his contemporary; by Malmsbury⁷, and by other chroniclers⁸; and by the Saxon preface to the work itself, which reads like the king's own language.⁹ A MS. of the Anglo-Saxon translation exists in the Bodleian

⁴ The first and last part of his address to the Supreme, is thus beautifully translated by our great moralist and critic:

O THOU, whose power o'er moving worlds presides;
 Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides;
 On darkling man, in pure effulgence, shine:
 And cheer the clouded mind with light divine.
 'Tis thine alone to calm the pious breast,
 With silent confidence and holy rest.
 From thee, great God! we spring; to thee we tend;
 Path; motive; guide; Original, and End.

Rambler, No. 7.

⁵ See his *Div. Naturæ*, p. 32. 34. 113. and 174. Gibbon calls the book of Boetius "a golden volume, not unworthy of the leisure of Plato, or Tully." *Hist. Decl.* vol. iv. p. 38.

⁶ *Ethel. Hist.* p. 847.

⁷ *Malm.* p. 45. and 248.

⁸ Henry de Silgrave; MSS. Cott. Cleop. A. xii. p. 15. and Joh. Bever, MSS. Harl. 641. p. 21.

⁹ Its literal translation is:—

"Alfred, king, was the translator of this book; and from book-latin into English turned it, as it now is done. Awhile he put down word for word: awhile sense for sense, so

library, with the metrum rendered in ¹⁰ prose. Another copy existed in the Cotton library with the metrum in Anglo-Saxon verse ¹¹, the preface to which also mentions Alfred as the ¹² translator.

CHAP.
II.

Alfred
considered
as a moral
essayist.

IN this translation of Boetius there is a value which has been hitherto unnoticed. It is that Alfred has taken occasion to insert in various parts, many of his own thoughts and feelings. He has thus composed several little moral essays, and by them has transmitted himself to posterity in his own words and manner.

as he the most manifestly and intellectually might explain it for the various and manifold worldly occupations that oft, both in mind and in body, busied him. These occupations are very difficult for us to number, which in his days came on this kingdom which he had undertaken. He learned this book, and turned it from Latin to the English phrase, and made it again into song, so as it is now done.

“ And now may it be, and for God’s name let him beseech every one of those that desire to read this book, that they pray for him, and do not blame him if they should more rightly understand it than he could : because that every man should, according to the condition of his understanding, and from his leisure, speak what he speaks, and do that which he doeth.” See the original in Rawlinson’s edition.

¹⁰ See Wanley’s Catal. p. 64. 85. From this Rawlinson published his printed work.

¹¹ It was MS. Otho. A. 6. when it was collated by Rawlinson. It has been since burnt. Wanley thought this MS. was one written in Alfred’s life-time. The versification of the metrum seems to be what the prose preface alludes to — “ and made it again into song.”

The plan of Boetius is to add to each division of his prose dialogue a metrum on the same subject in Latin verse.

¹² See Rawlinson.

BOOK

V.

It is highly interesting, at the distance of nearly one thousand years, to hear, as it were, our most revered sovereign speaking to us in his own language, on some of the most important topics of human life. Right feeling, and true wisdom appear in all these effusions, and entitle him to be deemed the first moral essayist of our island. As this is new ground, which has been hitherto unexplored, we will extract and translate literally several of the passages which Alfred has added to his version.

His feeling
of conju-
gial felicity.

BOETIUS had made philosophy call upon him to remember that, amidst his misfortunes, he had comfort yet left him — a celebrated father-in-law, his wife, and children.

ALFRED, after adding, “It is untrue, as thou thinkest, that thou art unhappy,” proceeds to enlarge on the short description of Boetius with such emphatic repetition, that it may be read as his own feeling of the value of an affectionate wife.

THE passages in italics are the additions of Alfred. —

“Liveth not thy wife also! — She is exceedingly prudent, and very modest. She has excelled all other women in purity. I may, in a few words, express all her merit: this is, that in all her manners she is like her father. She lives now for thee; *thee alone. Hence she loves nought else but thee. She has enough of every good in this present life, but she has despised it all for thee alone. She has shunned it all because only she has not thee also. This one thing is now wanting to her. Thine absence makes her think that all which she*

possesses is nothing. Hence for thy love she is wasting, and full nigh dead with tears and sorrow."¹³

CHAP.
II.

ALFRED dwells on the "vivit tibi" of Boetius with manifest delight, and dilates upon the thought as if with fond recollections of the conduct of his own wife, who shared his adversity with him.

CONGENIAL with this subject is the narration which he has given of Orpheus and Eurydice. Boetius, in a metrum of Latin verses, has in a more general manner described the incident. But Alfred tells the story so completely in his own way, and with so many of his own little touches and additions, as to make his account an original tale.—

"It happened formerly, that there was an harper in that nation which is called Thracia. It was a country in Greece. This harper was incomprehensibly good. His name was Orpheus: he had an incomparable wife: she was called Eurydice.

His story
of Orpheus
and Eury-
dice.

"Men then began to say of that harper, that he could harp so, that the woods danced, and the stones moved, from its sound. The wild deer would run to him, and stand as if they were tame; so still, that though men or hounds came against them they would not shun them.

"They mention also that this harper's wife died, and her soul was led into hell. Then the harper became very sorry, so that he could not be among other men. But he withdrew to the woods, and sat upon the mountains both day and night, and wept and harped. Then the woods trembled, and the rivers stopped, and no hart shunned the lion; no hare the hound. No cattle knew any mistrust or fear of others, from the power of his songs.

¹³ Alfred's Boet. p. 17. Rawl. Ed. Boet. lib. ii. prosa 4.

BOOK

V.

“ Then the harper thought that nothing pleased him in this world. Then he thought that he would seek the gates of hell, and begin to sooth with his harp, and pray that they would give him his wife again.

“ When he came there where he should come, that hell-hound whose name was Cerverus attacked him. He had three heads, but he began to sport with his tail, and to play with him for his harping. There was also there a very terrible gate-warder: his name should be Caron: he had also three heads, and he was very fierce. Then began the harper to supplicate him for his protection while he was there, and that he should be brought out from thence sound. Caron promised him this, because he was pleased with his uncommon song.

“ Then he went on further, till he met the grim goddesses that the multitude call Parcas. They say that they provide honour to no men, but punish every man according to his deserts, and that they govern every man's fortune.

“ Then he began to intreat their mercy, and they began to weep with him. Then he went further, and all the citizens of hell ran against him, and led him to their king. And all began to talk with him, and to ask what he prayed.

“ The restless wheel that Ixion was bound to, the king of Larista, for his guilt, stood still for his harping; Tantalus, the king that in this world was immoderately covetous, and whom the same evil passion followed, his covetousness was stayed; and the vulture forbore to tear the liver of Titius, the king that before was thus punished; and all hell's citizens rested from their torments while he harped before the king.

“ When he had long and long harped, the king of the citizens of hell called him and said, ‘ Let us give this slave his wife, for he hath earned her by his harping. Bid him, then, that he may well know, that he must never look back after he is gone from hence;’ and he said, ‘ If he look back, he shall lose this woman.’

“ But men can with great difficulty forbid love. Wel-away! What! Orpheus then led his wife with him, till he came to the boundary of light and darkness, then his wife went after him: then he came forth into the light: then he

looked back towards the woman, and she died away from him." ¹⁴ CHAP.
II.

IN another part we have his sentiments on riches. He has added to the reflections of Boetius the several following passages :

BOETIUS has merely said —

" Are riches precious in their own nature, or in yours? Which of them do you prefer, gold or accumulated money?" His thoughts on wealth and liberality.

¹⁴ P. 100. I have made the translation strictly literal; and will add as literal a one of the original of Boetius, that the reader may observe for himself what Alfred has made his own. " Formerly the Thracian poet, mourning the death of his wife, afterwards compelled, by his plaintive measures, the woods to run, and the moveable rivers to stand: the hind joined her intrepid side to the cruel lion's; nor did the hare fear the visible dog, made placid by the song. When the interior fervour of his bosom burnt more violent, those strains which subdued all could not sooth their master. Complaining of the cruel deities, he went to the infernal regions. There attempering his bland lays to the sounding strings, whatever he had imbibed from the chief fountains of the goddess mother; what impotent grief gave; what love, groaning in grief, wept, he expressed; and moving Tanarus, solicited with a sweet prayer the lords of the shades. Caught by the new song, the threefold porter was stupified. The guilty whom the goddesses, avengers of crimes, agitate with fear, now sorrowful, dissolve in tears. The swift wheel revolves not the head of Ixion; and Tantalus, perishing with thirst, despises the long streams. The vulture, satisfied with the harmony, drew not the liver of Titius. At length, ' We are conquered!' exclaims the pitying arbiter of the shades; ' Let us give the man his companion, his wife, bought by his song.' But a law restricted the gift, that while he should leave Tartarus he should not bend back his eyes. Who shall give a law to lovers? Love is a greater law to itself. Alas! near the borders of night, Orpheus saw, lost, and killed his Eurydice." Lib. iii. met. 12.

BOOK
V.

But these shine more by being poured out than by being heaped up; for avarice makes us always odious, but liberality illustrious."¹⁵

ON this text Alfred has expatiated into these effusions:—

“Tell me now whether thy riches, that in thine own thought are so precious, be so from their own nature. But yet, I tell thee that what is so of its own nature, is not so from thee. If then of its own nature it be so, and not of thine, why art thou then ever the better for its good.

“Tell me now which of these thou thinkest the most dear. Is it gold? I know that gold avails something. But though it now be gold, and dear to us, yet he will be more renowned, and more beloved, who gives it, than he who gathereth it, or plunders it from others. So riches are more reputable and estimable when men give them, than they are when men gather and hold them.

“Hence covetousness maketh the avaricious odious both to God and man; while bounty maketh us always pleasing and famous, and worthy both to God and to men who love it.

“Now as property may then belong both to those who give it, and to those who take it away, it is therefore always better and more valuable when given than when held.”¹⁶

ON this subject a passage may be read as an instance of the intelligent ease and force, with which the king partly translates, and partly imitates his author when he means to render him exactly.

BOETIUS says—

“Your riches, unless broken into pieces, cannot pass to many, and when this is done they must make those poor whom they quit. O narrow and impotent riches, which

¹⁵ Boet. lib. ii. prosa 5.

¹⁶ Alfred's Boet. p. 23, 24.

cannot be had entire by many, and yet cannot come to each without the poverty of the rest!"

CHAP.
II.

ALFRED'S version is : —

" Though thou shouldest divide them as small as dust, yet thou couldst not make all men to possess them equally; and when thou hadst divided them all, thou wouldest then be poor thyself. So worthy of a man are the riches of this world! No man may fully have them. They can make no man happy except they make others poor."

ALFRED has taken occasion to insert the following thoughts from his own mind, on reputation, obviously expressing his own feelings of the value of that blessing which has accompanied his memory : —

On a good
name.

" This is clear enough, that a good word, and good fame, are better and more precious to every man than any riches. The word filleth the ears of all who hear it; and it thrives not the less with those who speak it. It openeth the vacancy of the heart; it pierces through other hearts that are locked up, and in its progress among them it is never diminished. No one can slay it with a sword, nor bind it with a rope, nor ever kill it." ¹⁷

HE has so expanded the thought of Boetius, on the value of jewels, with turns and feelings of his own, and expressed them with so much more energy than his author, as to be in a great measure original even where he copies : —

" Why should the beauty of gems draw your eyes to them to wonder at them, as I know they do? What is then the nobility of that beauty which is in gems? It is theirs; not yours. At this I am most exceedingly astonished, why you should think this irrational, created good, better than

On the
value of
jewels.

¹⁷ Alfred, p. 24.

BOOK

V.

your own excellence : why should you so exceedingly admire these gems, or any of those dead-like things that have not reason ; because they can, by no right, deserve that you should wonder at them. Though they be God's creatures, they are not to be measured with you ; because one of two things occurs ; either they are not good for you themselves, or but for a little good compared with you. WE TOO MUCH UNDERVALUE OURSELVES when we love that which is inferior to us, and in our power, more than ourselves, or the Lord that has made us and given us all these goods."¹⁸

ALFRED's translation of the passages on the other advantages possessed by the rich is also so animated, that we quote it as a specimen of his own genuine feelings on the subject, with a version of the Latin¹⁹, that the reader may make his own comparison. —

On the advantages
of the rich.

“ ‘ Dost thou like fair lands ?’

“ Then Mind answered to Reason and said —

¹⁸ Alfred, p. 24. The literal English of Boetius is : —
“ Does the brightness of gems attract your eyes ? But the chief part of the splendour with them is the light itself of the jewels, not of the men, which indeed I wonder that any should so vehemently admire ; for what is there in that which wants the motion of the soul, and the combination of limbs ; which can seem by right to be beautiful to animate and rational nature ? Although they are the works of the Creator, and by this distinction attract something of the final beauty, yet, placed below your excellence, they by no means deserve your admiration.” Lib. ii. pr. 5.

¹⁹ The passage in Boetius is : — “ Does the beauty of the fields delight you ? — Why not ? It is a fair portion of the fairest work. So sometimes we delight in the face of the serene sea. So we admire the sky, the stars, the sun, and the moon. But does any of these touch you ? Do you dare to boast of the splendor of any such ?” Boet. lib. ii. pr. 5.

“ ‘ Why should I not like fair lands? How! Is not that the fairest part of God’s creation? Full oft we rejoice at the mild sea, and also admire the beauty of the sun, and the moon, and of all the stars.’ ”

CHAP.
II.

“ Then answered wisdom and reason to the mind, and thus said :—

“ ‘ How belongeth heaven’s fairness to thee? Durst thou glory that its beauty is thine? It is not, it is not. How! Knowest thou not that thou madest none of them. If thou wilt glory; glory in God.

“ ‘ Whether now dost thou rejoice in the fairer blossoms of Easter, as if thou hadst made them²⁰; canst thou now make any such? or hast thou made them? Not so, not so. Do not thou thus. Is it now from thy power that the harvest is so rich in fruits? How! Do I not know that this is not in thy power? Why art thou then inflamed with such an idle joy? or why lovest thou strange goods so immeasurably as if they now had been thine own?

“ ‘ Thinkest thou that fortune may do for thee, that those things be thine own, which of their own nature are made foreign to thee? Not so, not so. It is not natural to thee that thou should possess them; nor does it belong to them that they should follow thee. But the heavenly things, they are natural to thee; not these earth-like ones.

“ ‘ The earthly fruits are made for animals to subsist on²²; and the riches of the world are made to deceive those

²⁰ “ Are you yourself distinguished by the vernal flowers? Or does your abundance swell in the summer-fruits? Why are you carried away by empty joys? Why do you embrace external goods for your own? Will fortune make those things to be yours which by the nature of things she has made foreign to you?” Boet. lib. ii. pr. 5.

²¹ “ The fruits of the earth indeed are, without doubt, provided for the nourishment of animals. But if you wish to supply your wants by what is sufficient for nature, there is no reason that you should seek the affluence of fortune, for nature is contented with very little; whom if you urge into satiety by superfluities, what you shall pour in becomes unpleasant and hurtful.” Ibid.

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V.

men that are like animals; that are unrighteous and insatiable. To these they also oftenest come.

“ ‘ If thou wilt then have this moderation, and wilt know what necessity requires; this is, that meat and drink, and clothes, and tools for such craft as thou knowest are natural to thee, and are what it is right for thee to have. What advantage is it to thee that thou should desire these temporal riches above measure, when they can neither help thee nor themselves. With very little of them hath nature enough: with so much she has enough, as we before mentioned. If thou usest more of them, one of two things happens: either they hurt thee; or they are unpleasant. Inconvenient or dangerous is all that thou now doest beyond moderation. If thou eatest now, or drinkest immoderately; or hast more clothes on than thou needest, the excess becomes to thee either sorrow or nauseous, or unsuitable or dangerous.

“ ‘ If thou thinkest that extraordinary apparel be any honour²², then I assert the honour to belong to the workman who wrought it, and not to thee. The workman is God, whose skill I praise in it.

“ ‘ Thinkest thou that a great company of thy servants will make thee happy? ²³ Not so, not so. But if they be evil, then are they more dangerous to thee; and more troublesome, if bound to you, than if you had them not, because evil *thegns* will always be their lord's enemies. If they be good and faithful to their lord, and not of double mind—How! Is not this their virtue? It is not thine. How canst thou then possess their virtue? If thou now gloriest in this—How! Dost thou not glory in their merit? It is not thine.’ ”

²² “ Do you think it beautiful to shine in various garments? But if their appearance be agreeable to look at, I would admire either the nature of the materials, or the ingenuity of the artificer.” Boet. lib. ii. pr. 5.

²³ “ But will a long train of servants make you happy? who, if they be vicious in morals, are the pernicious burthen of a house, and grievously an enemy to their lord himself. If honest, how can another's probity be reckoned among your wealth?” Ibid.

ALFRED has added the following remarks of CHAP. II.
his own on the intrinsic value of worldly advantages : —

“ Now then, now, every creature shunneth that which is contrary to it, and toils very diligently that it be removed from him. But what two are more contrary between themselves than good and evil? They never will be harmonious together.

“ By this thou mayest understand, that if the prosperities of this present life, through themselves, possessed power of themselves, and were good from their own nature; they would then always cleave to those who work with them good, and not evil.

“ But there, where they be a good, then are they good through the goodness of the good man that doth good with them; and he is good through God. If then a bad man hath them, then are they evil through the badness of that man who doeth evil with them; and through the devil.”²⁴

HE has followed up these remarks by adding to Boetius's metrum on Nero, the following observations : —

“ What cruelties; what adulteries; and what crimes; and what impiety, that unrighteous Cesar Nero committed!

“ He commanded at some time that all Rome city should be burnt after the example, formerly, when Troy's city burnt. It pleased him also to see how it burnt, and how long, and how light, compared with that other.—

“ Thinkest now that the Divine power could not have removed the dominion from this unrighteous Cesar, and have restrained him from that evil if he would? Yes. Oh yes! I know that he might, if he had willed. Oh! how heavy a yoke he slipped on all that in his times were living on the earth, and how oft his sword was sullied with guiltless blood! How! Was it not there clear enough that power, of its own worth, is not good, when he is not good to whom it comes?”²⁵

²⁴ Alfred, p. 34, 35.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 36.

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V.

He has enlarged on the remark of Boetius on power, so as to exhibit his own sentiments in addition to those of his original.

BOETIUS had only said —

“ If ever, which is very rare, honours are conferred on the upright, what is pleasing in them but the integrity of those who use them? Thus honour accrues not to the virtues from the dignity, but to the dignity from the virtues.”²⁶

ALFRED, a king, expands this to insert his own feelings on this subject. —

On power. “ If then it should ever happen, as it very seldom happens, that power and dignity come to good men, and to wise ones, what is there then worthy of pleasing but the goodness and dignity of these persons : of the good king, not of the power. Hence power is never a good, unless he be good that has it ; and that is the good of the man, not of the power. If power be goodness, why then is it that no man by his dominion can come to the virtues, and to merit ; but by his virtues and merit he comes to dominion and power. Thus no man is better for his power ; but if he be good, it is from his virtues that he is good. From his virtues he becomes worthy of power, if he be worthy of it.”²⁷

He adds to this, entirely his own, and as if he intended it to be the annunciation to his people of his own principle of government : —

“ Learn therefore wisdom, and when ye have learned it, do not neglect it. I tell you then, without any doubt, that by that you may come to power, though you should not desire the power. You need not be solicitous about power, nor strive after it. If you be wise and good, it will follow you, though you should not wish it.”²⁸

²⁶ Boet. lib. ii. pr. 6.

²⁷ Alfred, p. 31.

²⁸ Alfred, p. 31, 32.

CONNECTED with the subject of power, Alfred has in another place inserted these passages of his own : —

CHAP.
II.

“ ‘ If thou now saw some very wise man that had very good qualities, but was nevertheless very poor, and very unhappy, whether wouldst thou say that he was unworthy of power and dignity ? ’

“ Then answered Boetius and said — ‘ Not so, Oh, not so. If I found him such, I would never say that he was unworthy of power and dignity, for me thinketh that he would be worthy of every honour that is in this world. ’ ” ²⁹

WITH the same freedom he amplifies another idea of Boetius, and applies it to express his own high estimate of the human mind.

His author says —

“ If you saw among mice, one claiming a right to himself, and power over the rest, to what a horse laugh would you be moved ? But if you look at the body, what can you find weaker than man, whom a bite of his flesh or of something within secretly creeping destroys ? ” ³⁰

ALFRED's paraphrase : —

“ If you now saw a mouse that was lord over another mouse, and established laws for him, and compelled him to pay taxes, how wonderlike you would think it ! What derision you would have of this ; and to how much laughter would you not be excited. How much more then would it be so to compare the body of man with the mind, than the mouse with the man ? You may easily conceive it. If you will diligently inquire about it, and investigate, you will find that no creature's body is tenderer than that of man's. The least fly may hurt it, and the gnats with their little stings

On the
mind.

²⁹ Alfred, p. 59, 60.

³⁰ Boet. lib. ii. pr. 6.

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V.

may injure it; and also the small worms that crawl within and without him, even sometimes nearly kill him. Indeed the little fleas may sometimes destroy him. Every living thing may hurt him, either inside or out." ³¹

HE then adds, partly translating and partly imitating Boetius: —

" But where can a man hurt another except in his body, or in that wealth which we call happiness? No one can injure the reasoning mind, nor make it that it should not be what it is." ³²

WE now come to a noble effusion of Alfred's mind and heart, on his own power and government.

BOETIUS had said —

" You know that the ambition of mortal things governed us but little; but we desired materials for acting, that virtue might not grow old in silence."

ON these few words Alfred has thus expatiated, to express from himself, and on his own situation, his views and feelings as a king, and his principles of conduct. We cannot avoid remembering, on reading this, that he hesitated about accepting the crown at his accession. He seems to allude to this circumstance. —

On his
principles
of govern-
ment.

" O Reason! thou knowest that covetousness, and the possession of this earthly power, I did not well like, nor strongly desired at all this earthly kingdom, except — Oh! I desired materials for the work that I was commanded to do. This was that I might unfractiously, and becomingly steer and rule the power that was committed to me — What! thou knowest that no man may know any craft nor rule, or

³¹ Alfred, p. 32.

³² Ibid.

steer any power without tools and materials. There are materials for every craft, without which a man cannot work in that craft.

“ These are the materials of a king’s work, and his tools to govern with; that he have his land fully peopled; that he should have prayer-men, and army-men, and work-men. What! thou knowest that without these tools no king may show his skill.

“ These are also his materials, that with these tools he should have provision for these three classes; and their provision then is, land to inhabit, and gifts, and weapons, and meat, and ale, and clothes, and what else that these three classes need; nor can he without these keep his tools; nor without these tools can he work any of those things that it is commanded to him to do.

“ For this purpose I desired materials to govern that power with, that my skill and power might not be given up and concealed. But every virtue and every power will soon become oldened and silenced if they be without wisdom. Therefore no man can bring forth any virtue without wisdom: hence whatsoever is done through folly, man can never make that to be virtue.

“ This I can now most truly say, that I HAVE DESIRED TO LIVE WORTHILY WHILE I LIVED, AND AFTER MY LIFE TO LEAVE TO THE MEN THAT SHOULD BE AFTER ME A REMEMBRANCE IN GOOD WORKS.”³³

It may amuse us to read Alfred’s picture of the Golden Age, in which he has added some marking circumstances of his own sentiments to his author’s description.

“ Oh how happy was the first age of this world, when every man thought he had enough in the fruits of the earth!³⁴ There were no rich homes, nor various sweet

Alfred on
the golden
age.

³³ Alfred p. 36, 37.

³⁴ Boetius’s lines are: “ Too happy was the prior age, contented with their faithful ploughs, nor lost in sluggish

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V.

dainties, nor drinks. They required no expensive garments, because there were none then; they saw no such things, nor heard of them. They cared not for luxury; but they lived naturally and temperately. They always ate but once a day, and that was in the evening. They ate the fruits of trees and herbs. They drank no pure wine. They knew not to mix liquor with their honey. They required not silken cloathing with varied colours. They always slept out under the shade of trees. The water of the clear springs they drank. They saw no merchant from island or shore, nor did any one hear of ship-armies, nor speak of battle, nor was the earth yet stained with the blood of slain men, nor were men then wounded, nor did they behold evil-willing men, nor had they any dignities, nor did men love them. Oh that our times now might be such! but now man's rapacity is as burning as flame, in that hell which is in the mount called *Ætna*, in the island named *Sicilia*. That mountain is always burning with sulphur, and it consumes all the places near and about it. Oh! the first covetous man was he that the earliest began to delve the earth after

luxury: it was accustomed to end its late fasts with the ready acorn; nor knew how to confuse the present of *Bacchus* with liquid honey; nor to mingle the bright fleece of the *Seres* with the *Tyrian* poison. The grass gave them healthful slumbers. The gliding river their drink. The loftiest pines their shades. They did not yet cut the depths of the sea; nor did the stranger see new shores with his merchandise collected from every side. The cruel trumpets were silent; nor did the effused blood with bitter hatred tinge horrid arms. Why should an ancient fury move any army against enemies, when no cruel wounds, and no rewards of blood were seen? I wish our times could return to the ancient manners. But the raging love of possessing burns fiercer than the fires of *Ætna*. Alas! who was he that first dug up the weight of the covered gold and gems, desiring to be hid,—those precious dangers? *Boet. lib. ii. met. 5.*

gold, and after gems; and found those dangerous valuables which before were hiddeñ and covered by the earth." ³⁵ CHAP.
II.

THIS sentence of Boetius : —

“ There is one thing which can seduce even minds excellent in their nature, but not yet brought to the full perfection of their virtues, that is the desire of glory, and the fame of the greatest merit towards the state; consider how slender and light a thing this is.” ³⁶

ALFRED has thus amplified : —

“ Oh, mind! one! oh! one evil is very much to be shunned. This is that which very unceasingly and very heavily deceiveth the mind of all those men who in their nature are select, and yet be not come to the roof of their full-framed virtues. This is then the desire of false glory, and of unrighteous power, and of immoderate fame of good works above all people; for many men desire power that they may have a good fame, though they be unworthy of it; and even the worst of all desire the same. But he that will wisely and diligently seek after this fame, let him very truly perceive how little it is, and how slight, and how tender, and how distinct from every good!” ³⁷ His
thought
on glory.

BOETIUS, after remarking, that but a fourth part of the earth was inhabited, continues : —

“ And that many nations, differing in language, manners, and all the habits of life, inhabit this small inclosure, which, from the difficulty of the journey, as well as from the diversity of their speech, and want of commerce, the fame not only of each man, but even of cities, cannot reach.” ³⁸

ALFRED has thus enlarged upon this sentiment, with the insertion of more knowledge as to the number of the languages of the world.

³⁵ Alfred, p. 29, 30.

³⁶ Boetius, lib. ii. pr. 7.

³⁷ Alfred, p. 37, 38.

³⁸ Boetius, lib. ii. pr. 7.

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V.

“ Why desire ye, then, so immoderately, that you should spread your name over the tenth part? for with the sea, with fens, and with all else, there is not more.

“ Bethink ye, also, that in this little park many nations dwell, and various ones; and very unlike, both in speech and customs, and in all their manners, are all these nations, that you now so immoderately desire that you should spread your name over. This you can never do; because their speech is divided into two and seventy languages, and each of these is divided among many nations. They are distinguished and separated by sea, and by woods, and by mountains, and by fens, and by many and various wastes and unfrequented lands, so that merchants indeed do not go to them.

“ But how can then the name of any powerful man come there separately, when they do not indeed hear there the name of his city, nor of the people where his home is fixed. This I know, with what folly you are yearning, when you would extend your name over the whole earth. This you can never do, nor indeed never nearly so.”³⁹

BOETIUS having said, from Cicero, that the Roman name had not passed Mount Caucasus, Alfred, exhibiting his own study of geography, adds:—

“ Nor among the Scythians who dwell on the other side of these mountains; where they had not heard of the names of the cities nor of the people of Rome.”⁴⁰—

“ No man hath the like praise in every land; because that which they do not like in some lands, they like in others.—

“ Writers, from their negligence and from carelessness, have left unwritten the manners and deeds of those men, who, in their days, were the worthiest and most⁴¹ illustrious.”

BOETIUS having said:—

³⁹ Alfred, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 40.

“What is there that attaches from fame to the eminent men who seek glory by virtue, after the dissolution of their body?”⁴²

CHAP.
II.

ALFRED thus dilates the thought:—

“What then has it profited the best men that have been before us, that they so very much desired this idle glory, and this fame after their death; or what will it profit those who now exist!

“There is more need to every man that he should desire good qualities than false fame. What will he have from that fame, after the separation of the body and the soul. How! do we not know, that all men die bodily, and yet their soul will be living. But the soul departs very free-like to Heaven. Then the mind will itself be a witness of God’s will.”⁴³

BOETIUS in the accompanying metrum had impressively sang:—

“Why do the proud strive to raise their necks from this mortal yoke in vain? Though their diffused fame, pervading many people, should be expressed in their languages, and the great family should shine with illustrious titles, death spurns the lofty glory; alike involves the high and humble head, and equals the lowest with the greatest. Where now lie the bones of the faithful Fabricius, or Brutus, or the rigid Cato?”⁴⁴

ALFRED has thus expanded, and added to these suggestions, with a little error as to Brutus and Cassius:—

“Oh, ye proud! why do you desire to put this death-like yoke upon your neck? or, why regard such idle toil, to spread your name among so many people.

⁴² Boetius, lib. ii. pr. 2. met. 7.

⁴³ Alfred, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Boetius, lib. ii. met. 7.

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V.

“ Though it now should happen that the uttermost nations should upheave your name, and celebrate you in many countries, and though any one should increase his birth with much nobility, and flourish in all wealth, and in all honours, yet death careth not for such; but he despiseth the noble, and devoureth alike the rich and the poor, and thus equals the powerful with the low.

“ Where are now the illustrious and the wise Goldsmith’s (Fabricius) bones, the foreigner? Hence I say the wise man; hence the skilful can never lose his skill; nor can men take it away from him easier than they can turn the sun from his place.

“ Where are now the foreigner’s bones, or who knows now where they were? or, where is now the illustrious and recorded Roman citizen, the heretoga, that was called Brutus, his other name Cassius? or, the wise and stedfast Cato? he was also a Roman heretoga: he was openly a philosopher. How! did they not anciently die, and no man knoweth where they now are?”⁴⁵

He exclaims from himself in another part:—

“ Oh, glory of this world! why do silly men with a false voice call thee glory? Now thou art not so; for more men have much pomp, and much glory, and much worship, from the opinion of foolish people, than they have from their own works.”⁴⁶

ALFRED adds on adverse fortune:—

On adversity.

“ I dread it not myself; for it often happens, that deceitful fortune can neither give man any help, nor take any⁴⁷ away.— Adverse fortune is the true happiness, though one does not think so; for it is to be depended upon, and always promises what is true.”⁴⁸

BOETIUS remarks:—

⁴⁵ Alfred, p. 42, 43.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 43.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 66.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 43, 44.

"Departing fortune takes away her own creatures and leaves thine. For how much would you, when intire, and as you seemed to yourself, fortunate, have bought this? Cease now to seek after your lost wealth; you have found friends, which are the most precious kind of wealth."⁴⁹

CHAP.
II.

On friend-
ship.

ALFRED reiterates the thought; and, by the emphasis of his repetitions, displays strongly his own sensibility, and probably his own experience of the different value of false and real friends.—

"But the false riches, when they depart from thee, they take away their men with them, and leave thy few true ones with thee. How wouldest thou now have bought this, when thou wert the most happy, and thought that thy fortune went most to thy will? With how much property wouldest thou have purchased this, that thou mightest manifestly know thy friends from thine enemies? I know, that with great property, thou wouldest have bought this, that thou mightest know to discriminate them well. Although thou thinkest that thou hast now lost a precious property, yet thou hast bought with it one much more valuable. These are true friends. These thou mayest now know, and thou perceivest what thou hast of them. This is of all things the dearest possession."⁵⁰

In another part he takes occasion to add to his original the same feelings.—

"True friends! I say then, that this is the most precious of all the riches of the world. They are not even to be reckoned among the goods of the world, but as divine ones; because false fortune can neither bring them nor take them away.

"Nature attracts and limes friends together with insepar-

⁴⁹ Boetius, lib. ii. pr. 2. met. 8.

⁵⁰ Alfred, p. 45.

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V.

able love. But with the riches of this world, and by our present prosperity, men oftener make an enemy than a friend.⁵¹

“The friends that loved him before for his wealth, they depart away with that wealth, and then become enemies; but the few that loved him from affection, and with truth, they would love him still, though he were needy. They would remain with him.”⁵²

ALFRED, from the text of the eighth metre of Boetius, has taken occasion to enlarge upon it, to express his philosophical views of the divine government of nature. —

His ideas
of the
system of
nature.

“One Creator is beyond any doubt; and he is also the Governor of heaven, and earth, and of all creatures visible and invisible. This is GOD ALMIGHTY. All things serve Him that serve thee; both those that know thee and those that do not know thee; both they which understand that they serve Him, and they which do not perceive it. The same has appointed unchangeable laws and customs, and also a natural harmony among all His creatures, that they should now stand in the world as He hath willed, and as long as He wills.

“The motions of all active creatures cannot be stilled, nor even altered from their course, and from the arrangement which is provided for them. But HE hath power over all His creatures; and, as with his bridle, confines, restrains, and admonishes them; so that they can neither be still, nor more strongly stir, than the space of His ruling reins permits. The Almighty God hath so coerced all his creatures with his dominion, that each of them striveth against the other; and yet is so wreathed with it, that they may not slide away from each other, but are turned again to that same course that they ran before. Thus will it be again renewed. Thus He varies it, that although the elements of a contrary kind contend betwixt themselves, yet they also hold a firm

⁵¹ Alfred, p. 51.

⁵² Ibid. p. 88.

peace together. Thus do fire and water, now, and sea and earth, and many other substances. They will always be as discordant among themselves, as they are now; and yet they are so harmonised, that they can not only be companions, but this further happens, that indeed none can exist without the rest. The one contrariety for ever restrains the other contrariety.

CHAP.
II.

“ So the Almighty God has most wisely and pertinently established the successive changes of all things. Thus now spring and harvest. In spring things grow. In harvest they become yellow. Again, summer and winter. In summer it is warm, and in winter cold. So the sun bringeth light days, and the moon enlightens the night through the same Deity’s might. So the same Power admonishes the sea, that it must not overstep the threshold of the earth. But he hath appointed its boundaries, that it may not extend its limits over the quiet earth.

“ By the same government is the like interchange directed of the flood and the ebb. He permits this appointment to stand as long as he wills it. But then, if ever he should let go the reins of those bridles with which he has now restrained his creations, the contrariety of which we have before spoken, if he were to allow it to escape, would destroy the peace that he now maintains. Each of them would contend with the other after his own will, and lose their combination, and destroy all this world, and bring themselves to nothing. The same God combines people in friendship together, and associates their families with purer love. He unites friends and companions, so that they truly retain their peace and attachment. How happy would mankind be from this, if their minds were as right, and as established, and as well ordered, as those of other creatures are !”⁵³

HE tells the story of Ulysses and Circe in his own way, and with his own additions, which

⁵³ Alfred, p. 45, 46. A comparison with Boetius, lib. ii. met. 8., will show Alfred’s great additions.

BOOK will show the nature of his historical know-
 V. ledge.—

His story
 of Ulysses
 and Circe.

“ There happened formerly, in the Trojan war, that there was a king of the name of Aulixes (Ulysses). He had two nations under the Cesar. These were called Ithacige and Retie, and the Cesar’s name was Agamemnon. Then Aulixes went with that Cesar to that battle. He had then some hundred ships. Then were they some ten years in that war.

“ Then the king returned home from that Cesar, when they had won the country. He had not then more ships than one ; but that was a three rower. Then a high tempest and a stormy sea withstood him, and he was driven into an island beyond the Wendel Sea. There lived a daughter of Apolline, the son of Job, (Jove.)

“ This Job was their king, and it pleased them that he should be their highest god, and these foolish men believed in him because he was of a kingly race, and they knew no other god in that time, but they worshipped their kings for gods. Then should Job’s father be also a god. His name was Saturnus, and they had him also the same for a god : and one of them was the Apolline that we have mentioned.

“ This Apolline’s daughter should be a goddess. Her name was Kirke. They said she was a very great magician ; and she lived in that island that the king was driven on. She had there a great retinue of her thegns, and also of other maidens.

“ Soon as she saw the forth-driven king, that we spoke of before, whose name was Aulixes, she began to love him, and each of them the other, so immoderately, that he for love of her abandoned all his kingdom and his family, and remained with her, till the time that his thegns would not stay longer with him ; but for love of their country, and from being exiled from it, they resolved to leave him. Then began false men to make spells, and they said, that by their magic they would spread and turn these men into the bodies of wild animals ; and afterwards throw them into chains and fetters.

“ Some they said they should transform into lions, and when they should speak then they roared. Some became

boars, and when they lamented their sorrow they furiously grunted. Some were changed into wolves, and, when they thought to speak, they howled. Some were turned to that deer kind, which men call tigers. Thus were all the company transformed into various kinds of deer, every one to some deer, except only the king. They shunned every meat that men eat, and desired those things which the deer eat. They had no likeness of man, neither in their body, nor in their voice; yet every one knew in his understanding as he did before. This understanding sorrowed very much for the miseries which they suffered."⁵⁴

CHAP.
II.

HE has inserted the following observations of his own, on the Supreme Good.—

“ This blessedness is then GOD. He is the beginning and the end of every good, and He is the highest happiness. “ There is no man that needs not some increase, but God alone. He hath enough in his own self. He needs nothing but that which He has in himself. —

His
thoughts
on the Su-
preme
Good.

“ By these things, we may manifestly understand, that every man desires this, that he may obtain the Supreme Good, where he can know it, or is enabled to seek it rightly. But they seek it not in the most right way. It is not in this world. —

“ There is no creature made, which does not desire that it may proceed thither, from whence it came before. This is to rest and felicity. Its rest is with God, and that is GOD.”⁵⁵

HE has added these remarks on wisdom.—

“ Wisdom is the highest virtue, and he hath in him four other virtues. One of these is prudence; another moderation; the third is courage; the fourth is righteousness. Wisdom maketh those that love it wise, and worthy, and constant, and patient, and righteous, and with every good habit filleth him that loveth it. They cannot do this who have the power

His
thoughts
on wis-
dom

⁵⁴ Alfred, p. 115. See Boetius, lib. iv. met 3.

⁵⁵ Alfred, p. 49. 53, 54, 55.

BOOK
V.

of this world; nor can they give any virtue from their wealth to those who love them, if they have it not in their nature. From this it is very evident, that the powerful in this world's wealth have no appropriate virtue from it; but their wealth comes to them from without, and they can have nothing from without which is their own." ⁵⁶

He turns a sentence of Boetius ⁵⁷, which he enlarges on, into a commendation of wisdom.—

“Do you see any thing in your body greater than the elephant; or stronger than the lion, or the bull; or swifter than that deer, the tiger? But if thou wert the fairest of all men in beauty, and shouldest diligently inquire after wisdom, until thou fully right understood it, then mightest thou clearly comprehend, that all the power and excellencies which we have just mentioned, are not to be compared with the one virtue of the soul. Now WISDOM is this one single virtue of the soul; and we all know that it is better than all the other excellencies that we have before spoken about.” ⁵⁸

He pursues the next sentence of ⁵⁹ Boetius, with his own original sentiments.

“Behold now the spaciousness, and the constancy, and the swiftness of the heavens. Yet we may understand that all this is not to be compared with its creator and its governor. But why do ye not let yourselves be weary of admiring and praising that which is unprofitable: this is worldly riches. For as heaven is better, and loftier, and fairer than all within it, except man alone; so is man's body better and more

⁵⁶ Alfred, p. 60.

⁵⁷ The passage in Boetius is: “Can you excel elephants in bulk, or bulls in strength, or precede tigers in swiftness?” lib. iii. prosa 8.

⁵⁸ Alfred, p. 70.

⁵⁹ The words in Boetius are only: “Survey the space, firmness, and rapidity of the heavens, and cease sometimes to admire vile things.” Boetius, lib. iii. prosa 8.

precious than all his possessions. But how much more, be- think thee, is the soul better and more valuable than the body. Every existence is to be honoured according to its proportion, and always the highest most. Therefore the divine power is to be honoured, admired, and worshipped above all other existences.”⁶⁰

C H A P.

II.

His free translation of the eighth metrum of Boetius⁶¹ is a specimen of his easy and flowing style, and at the same time a picture of the manners of his time. In this he also turns the ideas of his author, to express his own sublime piety and moral energy.

“ Oh! Woe! how heavy and how dangerous the folly is, which misleads unhappy men, and draws them from the right way. This way is God. Do ye now seek gold on trees? I know that you do not seek it there; nor find it on them, because all men know that it does not grow there. No more do jewels grow in vineyards. Do you now set your nets on the highest mountains, when you would fish? I know indeed that you do not place them there. Do you lead

⁶⁰ Alfred, p. 70.

⁶¹ The Latin of Boetius is: “ Oh, how ignorance leads wretched men from their right way! You do not seek gold on the green tree, nor pluck gems from the vine. You do not place nets on high mountains to enrich your tables with fish; nor, if you wish to follow the roe, do you hunt the Tuscan waves. Men know the recesses of the sea, that are hidden by the waves; and which wave is more fruitful of the snowy gems; which, of the blushing purple; and what shores excel in the tender fish, or the rough shell-fish. But how is it, they who desire good, blindly endure to be ignorant of it, and, degraded, seek that on earth which lies beyond the starry pole? What that is worthy shall I implore for the foolish minds? They crave wealth and honours; and when they have prepared the false things in a great mass, let them then discern the true goods of life.” Lib. iii. met. 8.

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your hounds and your nets out into the sea, when you would hunt? I think you would set them on hills and in woods. It is wonderful that industrious men understand that they must seek by sea-voyages, and on the banks of rivers, for both white gems and red ones, and jewels of every kind. They also know on what waters, and at the mouths of what rivers they should seek for fishes; and where they should search for all their present wealth; and most unweariedly they seek it. But it is a very pitiable thing, that weak men are so blind of all judgment, that they do not perceive where the true riches lie hid, and have no pleasure in inquiring for them. Yet they think, that in these frail and mortal things, they may find out the true good, which is God. I know not how I can express their folly so clearly, nor tell it so strongly as I would; because they are more deplorable, and sillier, and unhappier than I am able to explain. They desire wealth and dignity, and when they have them, they irrationally think that they possess true happiness." ⁶²

BOETIUS had merely said : —

"If any one, who had enjoyed several consulships, should go by chance among barbarous nations, would his honours make him venerated by them?" ⁶³

ALFRED on this brief passage pours out the following ideas. —

His
thoughts
on real
greatness.

"If any powerful man should be driven from his country, or should go on his lord's errand, and should then come to a foreign people, where no man knew him, nor he any one, nor indeed the language; dost thou think that his greatness would make him honourable in that land? But I know that it could not. If, then, dignity were natural to power, and were its own; or if the wealth of the rich were their own affluence, then they could not lose it. Were a person on any land soever, he would be there with what he possessed. His riches and his dignity would be with him; but because wealth and power have no merit of their own, they abandon

⁶² Alfred, p. 71, 72.

⁶³ Boetius, lib. iii. *prosa* 3.

him; and hence they have no natural good in themselves. Hence he loseth them, like a shadow or smoke, though false hope and imagination of weak men make power to be their highest good.

“Great men will be in one of two conditions, either in a foreign country, or in their own nation, with reasonable men; but both with these wise men, and with the foreigner, their power would be deemed nothing, after they had understood that they had not received it for any virtues; but from the praises of silly men. Yet, if wealth had any excellence of its own, or of nature, in its power, they would have it within them. Though they should lose their territory, they could not lose a natural good; but this would always follow them, and make them worthy in whatsoever land they were.”⁶⁴

THE following extract shows the ease with which he translates his author when he chooses to adhere to him. Boetius has a passage on the effect of the vices on the characters of men⁶⁵, which Alfred thus expresses with a little expansion:—

“But as the goodness of men raiseth them above human nature, to this that they be exalted to divine; so also their

⁶⁴ Alfred, p. 61.

⁶⁵ In Boetius it is: “As probity alone can raise any one above humanity, it follows that those whom wickedness throws down from the human condition, it lowers below the merit of a man. Therefore when you see any one transformed by vices, you cannot think him a man. Does a violent plunderer of another’s property glow with avarice? You may say he is like a wolf. Does a fierce and unquiet one exercise his tongue in strife? He is to be compared to a dog. Does a betrayer rejoice to have surprised by secret fraud? He is on a level with foxes. Does he rage with intemperate anger? Believe that he carries the soul of a lion:” &c. &c. lib. iv. pr. 3.

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evilness converts them into something below human nature, to the degree that they may be named devils. This we say should not be so; for if thou findest a man so corrupted, as that he be turned wholly from good to evil, thou canst not with right name him a man, but an animal. If thou perceivest of any man that he be covetous, and a plunderer, thou shalt not call him a man, but a wolf. And the fierce person that is restless, thou shalt call a hound, not a man. And the false, crafty one, a fox. He that is extremely moody, and enraged, and hath too great fury, thou shalt call a lion, not a man. The slothful that is too slow, thou shalt term an ass, more than a man. The unseasonably fearful person, who dreads more than he needs, thou mayest call a hare, rather than man. Thou mayst say of the inconstant and light minded, that they are more like the winds or the unquiet fowls, than steady men. And if thou perceivest one that pursues the lusts of his body, he is most like fat swine, who always desire to lay down in foul soils, and will not wash themselves in clear waters; or if they should, by a rare chance, be swimming in them, they throw themselves again on their mire, and wallow therein.”⁶⁶

ALFRED adds much of his own to Boetius's remarks on nobility, as : —

On birth.

“ Think now first of noble birth. If any one should glory in this, how idle and how fruitless would that glory be! Because every one knows that all men come from one father and one mother.”

THIS reason is the addition of Alfred: he also inserts the following passages from himself: —

“ Or again of fame among the multitude, or their praise. I know that we rejoice at this; although those persons now seem illustrious, whom the people praise, yet they are more illustrious and more justly to be applauded, when they are made worthy by their virtues; for no man is so by right from any other advantage.

⁶⁶ Alfred, p. 113, 114.

“ Art thou more beautiful for other men’s beauty? A man will be full little the better, because he hath a good father, if he himself is but naught. ”

CHAP.
II.

“ Therefore, I teach, that thou mayest rejoice in other men’s goods, and their nobility; for this chiefly, that thou art thereby exempt from toiling thy own self; because every man’s good and nobility is more in his mind than in his flesh.” ⁶⁷

He now adds, paraphrasing the words of Boetius ⁶⁸: —

“ This alone I yet know to be good in nobility: that it makes many men ashamed of being worse than their elders were; and therefore they strive all their power, that they may become better in some habits, and may increase their virtues.”

WITH the same nobleness of mind, he paraphrases and adds sentiments to the sixth metrum of Boetius ⁶⁹, which would surprise us from any other king, than the great-minded, wise, and moral Alfred. —

“ What! all men had a like beginning; because they all

⁶⁷ Alfred, p. 66, 67.

⁶⁸ Which are: “ If there be any good in nobility, I think it is this alone, that a necessity seems to be imposed on the noble, that they should not degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors.” Lib. iii. prosa 6.

⁶⁹ Boetius says: “ All the human race arises on earth from a like origin. There is one father of things: one administers all things. He gave the sun his rays, and he gave the moon her horns. He gave men to the earth, and stars to the sky. He has inclosed in limbs, souls sought from a lofty seat. Therefore a noble germ has produced all mortals. Why do you boast of your race and ancestors? If you look at your beginnings and your Author, God, you would perceive that no one lives ignobly born.” Lib. iii. met. 6.

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come of one father and one mother. They all are yet born alike. This is no wonder; because God alone is the father of all creatures. He made them all and governs all. He gave us the sun's light, and the moon, and placed all the stars. He created men on the earth. He has connected together the soul and the body by his power, and made all men equally noble in their first nature. Why then do ye arrogate over other men for your birth without works? Now you can find none unnoble. But all are equally noble, if you will think of your beginning creation, and the Creator, and afterwards of your own nativity; yet the right nobility is in the mind. It is not in the flesh, as we said before. But every man that is at all subjected to his vices, forsakes his Creator, and his first creation, and his nobility; and thence becomes more ignoble than if he were not nobly born."⁷⁰

ALFRED adapts to his own times a passage of *Boetius, which he rather imitates than translates, and thereby gives us a lively picture of the habits and pursuits of his day, with an allusion to his own sufferings.—

“Dost thou then mean to be covetous for money? Now thou mayest no how else get it, except *thou steal it, or plunder it, or find it hidden*, or there increase thyself with it, where you lessen it to others.

“Wouldest thou now be foremost in dignities? But if thou wilt have them, thou must flatter very miserably and very humbly those that may assist thee to them. If thou wilt make thyself better and worthier than many, then shalt thou let thyself be worse than some. How! is not this then some portion of unhappiness, that a man so brave should cringe to those that can give it?

“Desirest thou power? But thou shalt never obtain it free from sorrows, *from foreign nations, and yet more from thine own men and kindred.*

“Yearnest thou for glory? But thou canst never have it

without vexations; for thou wilt always have something contrary and unpleasing.

“Dost thou wish to enjoy thine unrestrained desires? But then thou wilt despise God’s commandments, and thy wearied flesh will have the command of thee; not thou of that. How can a man become more wretched, than by being subject to his wearying flesh, and not to his reasoning soul?”⁷¹

WE now come to a series of thoughts on kings, in which Alfred largely adds to those of Boetius.⁷² They display his feelings on kingly power used for oppression; his magnanimity in alluding to his own anxieties and vicissitudes; his estimate of sovereign greatness; his reasoning cast, and effusion of consecutive thought, and his flowing style.—

“Dost thou now think that the friendship and society of kings, and the wealth and power which they give to their favourites, may make any man happy or powerful? On kings.

“Then answered I, and said, why may they not? What is in this present life more pleasant and better than the retinue

⁷¹ Alfred, p. 69, 70.

⁷² The passage of Boetius is: “Do kingdoms or the familiarity of kings make you powerful? Why not? Since their felicity lasts perpetually. But antiquity is full of examples, the present age is full of them, in which the felicity of kings has been changed by calamity. Oh, excellent power! which is not found to be sufficiently efficacious to its own preservation. Yet if this power of kingdoms were the author of blessedness, would it not, if failing in any part, lessen our felicity and introduce misery. But though human empire should be widely spread, yet it must abandon many nations, over whom every king cannot reign. Wherever the power that makes us happy ceases, that impotence enters which makes us miserable. Therefore kings must have a larger portion of misery.” Boetius, lib. iii. *prosa* 5.

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of the king, and to be near him and the wealth and power that follow."

"Then answered Wisdom, and said: 'Tell me, now, whether thou ever heardest, that these things always continued with those who have been before us; or dost thou think that any may always keep what they now possess? Dost thou not know that all books are full of the examples of men that lived before us; and every man knows, that of those who now are alive, the power and affluence have changed with many kings, till they have become poor again.

"Oh, this is a very admirable felicity, that neither may support itself nor its lord, so that he need no more help, or that they be both retained!

"How! is your highest happiness the power of kings, and yet, if there be any failure of his will to any king, then that diminishes his power and increaseth his misery! Hence this your happiness will always be in some things unblest.

"But kings! though they rule many nations, yet they rule not all those that they would govern; and for this they are so wretched in their minds; because they have not something which they would have.

"Therefore, I know, that the king who is rapacious hath more misery than power."⁷³

ALFRED continues the theme with a direct allusion to himself:—

"Thus is it said, formerly of a king that unrightfully seized his power.⁷⁴ Oh! what a happy man was he, that

⁷³ Alfred, p. 62, 63.

⁷⁴ The Latin original of this part expresses "the tyrant who had experienced this sort of danger, compared his fear to the terror of a sword hanging over his head. What then is this power which cannot expel the gnawings of cares, nor the stings of apprehensions? They who wished to have lived secure could not, and yet boast of their power. Do you think him powerful who you see wishes what he cannot effect? Do you think him powerful who surrounds his side with a guard; who himself dreads those whom he terrifies;

always had a naked sword hanging over his head from a small thread! so *as to me it always yet did.* C H A P.
II.

“How! dost thou think now that wealth and power are pleasing, when they are never without fear, and difficulties, and sorrows? What! thou knowest that every king would wish to be without these, and yet have power, if he might; but I know that he cannot.

“This I wonder at; why they should glory in such power. Whether dost thou think now, that a man who has much power is very happy, that always desires what he may not obtain; or believest thou that he is very happy that always goes out with a great train; or, again, he that dreads both those who dread him, and those who fear him not.

“Whether dost thou think that the man has much power, who himself fancies that he has none, as now many believe that they have none, except they have many persons to obey them.

“What need we now more speak of kings and their followers, except that every wise man may know that they be full wretched and full unmighty. How can kings deny or conceal their unmightiness, when they cannot display their dignity without the help of their thanes.”⁷⁵

HE enlarges greatly on the short metre of Boetius, on tyrannical kings⁷⁶, and describes

who, however powerful he may seem, is placed in the hands of his servants? Why should I dissert on the companions of kings, when I have shown their own government to be so full of imbecility.” Boetius, lib. iii. *prosa* 5.

⁷⁵ Alfred, p. 63, 64.

⁷⁶ The English of Boetius is: “If, from the proud kings whom you see sitting on the lofty summit of the throne, splendid in their shining purple; hedged with sad arms; threatening with their stern countenance; breathless with the fury of their hearts; any one should draw aside the coverings of a vain dress, you would see the lord loaded with strong chains within. Here the lust of rapacity pours its poison on their hearts. Here turbid wrath raising its waves lashes their minds, or grief wearies its captive, or disappoint-

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them with the costume of his own times. A sovereign himself, he displays the superior nobility of his mind in perceiving so impartially, and painting so strongly the vicious feelings of bad and weak-minded rulers.

“ Hear now a discourse on proud and unrighteous kings. We see them sitting on the highest high seats. They shine in garments of many kinds, and are with a great company of their thegns standing about them; who are adorned with belts, and golden hilted swords, and manifold warlike appendages. They threaten all mankind with their majesty; and of those they govern, they care neither for friend nor foe, no more than a maddened hound. They are very incomprehensibly puffed up in their minds from their immoderate power.

“ But if men should divest them of their clothes, and withdraw from them their retinue and their power, then might thou see that they be very like some of their thegns that serve them, except that they be worse. And if it was now to happen to them that their retinue was a while taken away, and their dress and their power, they would think that they were brought into a prison, or were in bondage; because from their excessive and unreasonable apparel; from their sweet-meats, and from the various drinks of their cup, the raging course of their luxury is excited, and would very powerfully torment their minds. Then would increase both their pride and their inquietude; then would they be enraged; then would their minds be lashed with the fervour of their hot-heartedness, till they were overcome with their own sadness, and were made captives. After this were done, the hope of their revenge would begin to cheat them, and whatsoever their anger desired they would promise themselves that this would be their security.

“ I told thee formerly in this same book, that all creatures desire some good from nature: but unrighteous kings can

ing hope torments them. Then as you see one single head bears so many tyrants, how can he that is oppressed by such wicked masters do what he wishes.” Boetius, lib. iv. met. 2.

do no good. Hence I said it to thee. This is no wonder, because they subject themselves to all the vices that I before named to thee. Thus they are necessarily under the power of these masters, whom at first they might have subdued. And, what is worse, they will not oppose these when they might begin to do it; and thus cannot continue in the struggle, though then they would have had no guilt." 77

THE warmth of feeling, and voluntary additions and amplifications here exhibited by Alfred, on this delicate subject, in which he was so personally involved, tempt one to recollect his own faults in the first part of his reign, and to believe that he is describing, with a generous self-reproach, some of his own former tendencies and imperfections, and some of the effects of his own humiliations.

THE freedom which Alfred has taken in adding to his author what he pleases; in substituting opinions and reasoning of his own instead of those he found; and of enlarging upon the topics that pleased him, makes this work a record of the king's own feelings. Hence many parts in which the king paraphrases his original become interesting to us as evidences of his own sentiments, although the substance of them be found in Boetius. One of these is the conversation on adversity. Alfred had become well acquainted with this unwelcome visitor, and he repeats, enlarges, and sometimes alters what Boetius had said upon it sufficiently to show

77 Alfred, p. 110, 111.

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that he has given us the effusions of his own heart and mind upon the subject. From a king who did not write, like Seneca, in the full enjoyment of every luxury, which he never lessened; but who formed and penned his thoughts amid vicissitudes, difficulties, privations and dangers that would have overwhelmed most other men, a statement of the uses of adversity is peculiarly valuable for its sincerity as well as practical wisdom. Nor are the ease and breaks of the dialogue, and flow of style, less remarkable than the justness of the feeling, in the following passages ⁷⁸:—

On the
benefits of
adversity.

“ ‘ Dost thou now understand whither this discourse will lead us ?

“ ‘ Tell me whither it will.

“ ‘ I would say, that every fortune is good ; whether men think it good, or whether they think it evil.

“ ‘ I imagine it may easily be so, though we should at times think otherwise.

“ ‘ There is no doubt that every fortune is good in those things that be right and useful ; for this reason, every fortune, whether it be pleasant, or whether it be unpleasant, cometh to the good for the purpose that it may do one of two things : either it urges them to this, that they should act better than they did before, or it rewards them for what they have done well before. And again, every fortune of those things that come to evil men, cometh for these two purposes, whether it be severe, or whether it be pleasant : if severe fortune cometh to evil men, it comes as a retribution for their evils, or for correction, and to teach them that they do not act so again.’

⁷⁸ To see how much Alfred has added of his own, both of dialogue and sentiment, on this part, the reader may compare Boetius, lib. iv. *prosa* 7.

“ Then I began to wonder, and said —

“ ‘ Is it from inwardly right observation that thou explainest this so ?’

“ ‘ It is as thou sayest. But I would, if thou art willing, that we turn a little while to the popular discourse on this subject, lest they should say that we are talking above man’s understanding.’

“ ‘ Speak as you wish.’

“ ‘ Dost thou suppose that that is not good which is useful ?’

“ ‘ I suppose that it is good.’

“ ‘ Then every fortune is useful that happens to thee. It either teaches, or it punishes.’

“ ‘ This is true.’

“ ‘ Adverse fortune is a good to those who strive against vices, and inclineth them to good.’

“ ‘ I cannot contradict this.’

“ ‘ What dost thou suppose of that good fortune which comes often to good men in this world so as to be a foretoken of eternal blessings ? Whether can people say of this that it is evil fortune ?’

“ Then I smiled, and said —

“ ‘ No man would say that, but would declare that it is very good. So also it would be.’

“ ‘ What thinkest thou of that invisible fortune that often threatens the evil to punish them ? Whether would this folk suppose that that was good fortune ?’

“ ‘ They would not suppose that it was good, but would think that it was very miserable.’

“ ‘ Let us then pause, that we may not think so as the people think ; if we should think on this as the people suppose, then we should lose all reason and all rightwiseness.’

“ ‘ Why should we lose these ever the more ?’

“ ‘ Because the populace say that every severe and unpleasant fortune is an evil. But we should not believe this ; because that every fortune is good, as we before mentioned, whether it be severe, or whether it be pleasant.’

“ Then I was afraid, and said —

“ ‘ That is true which thou sayest. Yet, I know not how

BOOK I dare to mention it to foolish men, because no foolish man
V. can believe it.

“ Then wisdom severely opposed, and said —

“ ‘ For this reason no wise man should tremble or lament at what may happen to him in this way, whether severe or agreeable fortune comes to him, no more than a brave vassal should lament about how often he must fight. Nor will his praise be less. But the hope is that it will be greater. So also will the meed of the wise be greater, the more angry and severer fortune that befalls him. No wise man should desire a soft life, if he careth for any virtues or any worship here from the world, or for eternal life after this world. But every wise man should struggle both against hard fortune and against a pleasant one: lest he should presume upon his good fortune, or despair of his bad one. But it is needful to him that he should find out the middle way between severe and agreeable fortune, that he may not desire a more pleasant one, nor more enjoyment than will be suitable to him: nor again, a severer fortune; for this reason, that he may not suffer any thing unbecoming. But it is in their own power which of these they should choose. If then they will find out this middle path, then shall they themselves moderate their good fortune, and their enjoyments. Then will God mitigate to them all severe fortune, both in this world and in that which is to come, so as that they may bear it.” ⁷⁹

ALFRED now omits all the seventh metre of Boetius but the last three verses and a ⁸⁰ half; and these he enlarges upon into this animated exhortation, which obviously issues from his heart:—

“ Well! O wise men! Well! Go all into the way which

⁷⁹ Alfred, 136—138.

⁸⁰ There are in Boetius: “ Go now, ye brave! where the lofty way of a great example leads you. Why should you, inert, uncover your backs? The earth, when conquered, gives us the stars,” lib. iv. met. 7.

the illustrious examples of those good men, and those worthy heroes that were before you, lead you. Oh! ye slothful and idle loiterers, why will ye be so unprofitable and so enervated? Why will ye not ask after the wise and the worthy; such as they were that lived before you? and why will ye not then, after you have inquired into their customs, listen to them the most earnestly you may? For they struggled after worship in this world, and toiled for a good fame by good works, and wrought a good example for those that should be after them. Hence they dwell now above the stars in everlasting blessedness for their good works.”⁸¹

AFTER a discussion that the five most desired things of human life are, wealth, power, worship, fame, and pleasure; and that all these fail to give true happiness, their conversation turns upon what is the supreme good in which this can be obtained. All this part is translated by Alfred with the same spirit and freedom, and vivacity of dialogue, of which we have already given specimens. Alfred, at length, adds of his own:—

“ That, methinketh, would be the true and perfect felicity, that would give to its followers permanent affluence and eternal power, and perpetual reverence, and everlasting fame, and fulness of joy;”—

and asks wisdom to inform him where this is to be found; who, reminding him that Plato advised us to implore the Divine help in small things as well as in great, proceeds to utter that noble address to the Deity, of which Dr. Johnson has so finely translated the beginning and the

⁸¹ Alfred, p. 138.

BOOK conclusion into those beautiful lines already
 { **V.** cited.

PARTS of this address are very fine in Boetius, but the whole is finer in Alfred; for it is made more natural, more flowing from the heart, and more expanded, both in the feeling and the illustrations. It is a noble specimen of Alfred's lofty and enlarged, and even philosophical theism—the best foundation, and most attractive support of Christianity. He mingles with his devotion all the natural philosophy he possessed. Our ancient king has added to it so much of his own as to make it almost his original composition.

THE extent of his additions will be perceived when the reader is told that the passage occupies 28 lines in Boetius ⁸², and 131 in Alfred. —

Alfred's
 philoso-
 phical ad-
 dress to
 the Deity.

“ O Lord! How great and how wonderful art thou! Thou! that all thy creatures, visible and also invisible, hast wonderfully made, and wisely dost govern. Thou! who the courses of time, from the beginning of the world to the end, hast established in such order, that from thee they all proceed, and to thee return. Thou! that all moving creatures stirrest to thy will, while thou thyself remainest ever tranquil and unchangeable. Hence none exists mightier than THOU art: none like THEE. No necessity has taught Thee to make

⁸² That the reader may perceive what is Alfred's own, we shall add a version of his original. It begins, “ O THOU, who governest the world with continual reason! Author of the earth and heaven! who commandest time to move from eternity, and, stable and enduring thyself, givest all things to be moved! Whom external causes have not impelled to form the work of flowing matter, but the innate form of the supreme good, void of all envy.” Boet. lib. iii. met. 9.

what Thou hast made; but, of Thine own will, and by Thy own power, THOU hast created all things. Yet THOU hast no need of any.

“Most wonderful is the nature of THY goodness, for it is all one, Thou and Thy goodness. Good comes not from without to THEE; but it is Thine own, and all that we have of good in this world, and that is coming to us from without, proceeds from THEE. Thou hast no envy towards any thing.

“None, therefore⁸³, is more skilful than THOU art. No one is like Thee; because Thou hast conceived and made all good from thine own thought. No man has given Thee a pattern; for none of these things existed before Thee to create any thing or not. But THOU hast created all things very good and very fair; and THOU Thyself art the highest and the fairest good.

“As THOU Thyself didst conceive, so hast Thou made this world; and Thou rulest it as THOU dost will; and Thou distributest Thyself all good as Thou pleasest. Thou hast made all creatures alike, or in some things unlike, but Thou hast named them with one name. Thou hast named them collectively, and called them the World. Yet this single name Thou hast divided into four elements.⁸⁴ One of these is Earth; another, Water; the third, Air; the fourth, Fire. To each of these Thou hast established his own separate position; yet each is classed with the other; and so har-

⁸³ Boetius proceeds: “Thou ledest all things by thy superior example. Fairest of all thyself! Thou bearest the fair world in thy mind, forming it in a resembling image, and commanding the perfect to have perfect parts.” Lib.iii. met. 9.

⁸⁴ “Thou bindest the elements by numbers, that cold may suit with flame, and the dry with the liquid, lest the purer fire should fly off, or their weight lead the earth to be submerged. Thou connecting the middle soul that moves all things of threefold nature, resolvest it through consonant members. When divided, it assembles motion into two orbs, goes on to return into itself, circles round the profound mind, and turns heaven with a similar impress.” Boetius, *ibid.*

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V.

moniously bound by thy commandment, that none of them intrudes on the limits of the other. The cold striveth with the heat, and the wet with the dry. The nature of the earth and water is to be cold. The earth is dry and cold; the water wet and cold. The air then is called either cold, or wet, or warm; nor is this a wonder, because it is made in the middle between the dry and the cold earth, and the hot fire. The fire is the uppermost of all this world's creations.

“ Wonder-like is Thy plan, which THOU hast executed, both that created things should have limits between them, and be also intermingled; the dry and cold earth under the cold and wet water, so that the soft and flowing water should have a floor on the firm earth, because it cannot of itself stand. But the earth preserves it, and absorbs a portion, and by thus imbibing it the ground is watered till it grows and blossoms, and brings forth fruits. But if the water did not thus moisten it, the earth would be dried up and driven away by the wind like dust and ashes.

“ Nor could any living creature enjoy the earth, or the water, or any earthly thing, for the cold, if THOU didst not a little intermix it with fire. Wonderful the skill with which Thou hast created that the fire should not burn the water and the earth. It is now mingled with both. Nor, again, can the water and the earth entirely extinguish the fire. The water's own country is on the earth, and also in the air, and again, above the sky: but the fire's own place is over all the visible creatures of the world; and though it is mingled with all the elements, yet it cannot entirely overcome any of them; because it has not the leave of the Almighty.

“ The earth, then, is heavier and thicker than the other elements, because it is lower than any other except the sky. Hence the sky is every day on its exterior; yet it no where more approaches it, but in every place it is equally nigh both above and below.

“ Each of the elements that we formerly spoke about has its own station apart, and though each is mingled with the other, so that none of them can exist without the other, yet they are not perceptible within the rest. Thus water and earth are very difficult to be seen, or to be comprehended

by unwise men, in fire, and yet they are therewith commingled. So is also the fire in stones and water very difficult to be perceived; but it is there.

“THOU bindest fire with very indissoluble chains, that it may not go to its own station, which is the mightiest fire that exists above us, lest it should abandon the earth, and all other creatures should be destroyed from extreme cold in case it should wholly depart.

“THOU hast most wonderfully and firmly established the earth, so that it halts on no side, and no earthly thing falls from it; but all earth-like things it holds that they cannot leave it. Nor is it easier to them to fall off downwards than upwards.

“THOU also stirrest the threefold soul in accordant limbs, so that there is no less of that soul in the least finger than in all the body. By this I know that the soul is threefold, because foreign writers say that it hath three natures. One of these natures is that it desires; another that it becomes angry; the third that it is rational. Two of these natures animals possess the same as men: one is desire, the other is anger. But man alone has reason, no other creature has it. Hence he hath excelled all earthly creatures in thought and understanding; because reason shall govern both desire and wrath. It is the distinguishing virtue of the soul.

“THOU hast so made the soul that she should always revolve upon herself as all this sky turneth, or as a wheel rolls round, inquiring about her Creator or herself, or about the creatures on the earth. When she inquireth about her Creator she rises above herself; when she searches into herself, then she is within herself; and she becomes below herself when she loves earthly things, and wonders at them.

“THOU, O LORD! wilt grant the soul a dwelling in the heavens⁸⁵, and wilt endow it there with worthy gifts, to every

⁸⁵ Boetius adds: “Thou with like causes conveyest souls and inferior life, and adapting the sublime beings to lighter chariots, thou sowest them in heaven and in earth, and by a benign law maketh them, converging, to be brought back to thee like the flame of a torch.” Boet. lib. iii. met. 9.

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V.

one according to their deserts. Thou wilt make it to shine very bright, and yet with brightness very various; some more splendidly, some less bright, as the stars are, each according to his earning.

“THOU, O LORD! gatherest the heaven-like souls, and the earth-like bodies; and Thou minglest them in this world so that they come hither from Thee, and to Thee again from hence aspire. Thou hast filled the earth with animals of various kinds, and then sowed it with different seeds of trees and herbs.

“Grant now, O LORD⁸⁶, to our minds that they may ascend to Thee from the difficulties of this world; that from the occupations here they may come to Thee. With the opened eyes of our mind may we behold the noble fountain of all good! THOU ART THIS. Give us then a healthy sight to our understanding, that we may fasten it upon THEE. Drive away this mist that now hangs before our mental vision, and enlighten our eyes with Thy light. For THOU art the brightness of the true light. Thou art the soft rest of the just. Thou causest them to see it. Thou art the beginning of all things, and their end. Thou supportest all things without fatigue. Thou art the path and the leader, and the place to which the path conducts us. All men tend to THEE.”⁸⁷

Alfred's
metaphy-
sics.

ONE of the most curious parts of Alfred's Boetius is his metaphysical reasoning.

⁸⁶ This, which is the best part of the metrum of Boetius, is literally thus: “Grant my mind, O Father! to ascend to thine august seat. Grant it to survey the source of good: grant it, with the attained light, to fix the visible eyes of its intellect on thee. Cast off the clouds and weight of this terrestrial mass, and shine on it in thy splendor; for THOU art serenity; thou art rest to the pious. To behold thee is our end, O origin, supporter, leader, path, and termination!” Ibid.

⁸⁷ Alfred, p. 77—80. May we not say, without exaggeration, that Alfred has improved upon his original?

WHEN he comes to the fifth book, he leaves off translating his author, and indulges his own meditations on chance, free will, the Divine prescience, providence, the perceptions of animals; on the difference betwixt human reason and the understanding of angels; and on the Divine nature.

CHAP.

II.

THAT an Anglo-Saxon, when his whole nation was so illiterate, and both public and private affairs so disturbed, should attend at all to metaphysical studies is extraordinary; but that Alfred, the king whose life was so embarrassed by disease and warlike tumult, should have had either leisure or inclination to cultivate them, and should have reasoned upon them with so much concise good sense as the following extracts will show that he did, is not the least surprising circumstance in his character. But a sagacious judgment attended him in every thing that he attempted.

How clearly has Alfred apprehended, and with what congenial enlargement and philosophy of mind has he in his own way stated and condensed the reasoning, more diffused and not so clear, of Boetius, on chance. The sentence in italics is rather implied than expressed, in Boetius. ⁸⁸—

“ ‘ It is nought when men say that any thing happens by chance, *because every thing comes from some other things or* On chance.

⁸⁸ See Boet. lib. v. prosa. 1.

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causes, therefore it has not happened from chance; but if it came not from any thing, then it would have occurred from chance.'

" 'Then,' said I, 'whence first came the name?' Then, quoth he, 'My darling, Aristotle mentioned it in the book that is called *Fisica*.' Then said I, 'how does he explain it?' He answered, 'Men said formerly, when any thing happened to them unexpectedly, that this was by chance. As if any one should now dig the earth, and find there a treasure of gold, and should then say that this happened by chance. But yet, I know that if the digger had not dug into the earth, and no man before had hidden the gold there, he would by no means have found it. Therefore it was not found by chance.' " ⁸⁹

COULD any reasoner have put this philosophical doctrine more correctly or concisely?

IN the fifth book, we have Alfred's thoughts on the liberty of human actions. They are founded on the suggestions of Boetius ⁹⁰; but he not only selects from his original what he liked on this subject, and compressed what he found diffused, into a small and expressive compass, but he states it so much in his own manner, as to show that he had well considered the subject, and has given us his genuine sentiments upon it. —

On the
freedom of
the will.

" I would ask thee, whether we have any freedom or any power, what we should do, or what we should not do; or does the Divine preordination or fate compel us to that which we wish?

" Then, said he, 'We have much power. There is no rational creature which has not freedom. He that hath reason may judge and discriminate what he should will, and what he should shun; and every man hath this freedom,

⁸⁹ Alfred, p. 139.

⁹⁰ In his fifth book.

that he knows what he should will and what he should not will. All rational creatures have a like freedom. Angels have right judgments, and good will, and all that they desire they obtain very easily, because they wish nothing wrong. But no creature hath freedom and reason, except angels and men. Men have always freedom; and the more of it as they lead their minds towards divine things. But they have less freedom when they incline their minds near to this world's wealth and honours. They have no freedom, when they themselves subject their own wills to the vices; but, so soon as they turn away their mind from good, they are blinded with unwiseness.' " 91

C H A P.

II.

ALL the good sense of this much agitated discussion seems to be condensed in these clear and forcible passages.

ALFRED, instead of translating the subsequent observations of Boetius, has inserted the following questions, and their answers from his own mind. The answer contains an illustration, that strongly shows his own high-mindedness as a king, in loving to have free men in his court.—

"I said, 'I am sometimes very much disturbed.' Quoth he, 'At what?' I answered:

"It is at this which thou sayest, that God gives to every one freedom to do evil, as well as good, whichsoever he will; and thou sayest also, that God knoweth every thing before it happens; and thou also sayest, that nothing happens, but that God wills, or consents to it: and thou sayest that it shall all go as he has appointed. Now, I wonder at this: why he should consent that evil men should have freedom that they may do evil, as well as good, whichsoever they will, when he knew before that they would do evil.'

Why men have freedom of will.

"Then quoth he, 'I may very easily answer thee this remark. How would it now look to you, if there were any

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very powerful king, and he had no freemen in all his kingdom, but that all were slaves?'

"Then said I, 'It would not be thought by me right, nor also reasonable, if servile men only should attend upon him.'

"Then quoth he, 'It would be more unnatural, if God, in all his kingdom, had no free creature under his power. Therefore he made two rational creatures free; angels and men. He gave them the great gift of freedom. Hence they could do evil as well as good, whichsoever they would. He gave this very fixed gift, and a very fixed law with that gift to every man unto his end. The freedom is, that man may do what he will; and the law is, that he will render to every man according to his works, either in this world or in the future one; good or evil, whichsoever he doeth. Men may obtain through this freedom whatsoever they will; but they cannot escape death, though they may by good conduct hinder it, so that it shall come later. Indeed they may defer it to old age, if they do not want good will for good works.'

"Then said I, 'Thou hast well removed that doubt.'"⁹²

THIS solution of the difficulty proposed, shews that Alfred was the true king of an English people. He felt from his own great heart, that the Divine Sovereign must prefer to govern freemen rather than slaves; because such were his own sentiments as a king. The force of his answer rested on this noble feeling. If it be derogatory to the dignity of an earthly monarch, to have only slaves for his subjects, how much more unnatural would it be, that the King of kings should have no creatures with free will.

THE following passages on the same metaphysical subject are also Alfred's own compo-

⁹² Alfred, p. 141, 142.

sitions, which he inserts instead of the reasoning of Boetius. They obviously express his own feelings, and investigations, and the arguments by which his doubts were satisfied.—

CHAP.
II.

“ But I am yet grieved with much more trouble, even to sadness.

On the Divine Providence.

“ What is thy grief about ?

“ It is about the Divine Providence. Because we heard it, some while since, said, that all shall happen as God, at the beginning, had appointed, and that no man can change it. Now methinketh, that he errs, when he honoureth the good, and also when he punishes the evil ; if it be true, that it was so shaped by him, that they cannot do otherwise. We labour unnecessarily when we pray, and when we fast, or give alms ; if we have no more merit from it, than those that in all things proceed according to their own will, and run after their bodily pleasures.”

THE answer begins by a reference to Cicero, whom Boetius had cited for the argument, for which Alfred had substituted his own difficulty. But he deviates immediately into reasoning of his own.

“ I tell thee, if this be true, we ought to say, that it was an unnecessary commandment in the divine books, that God should order man to forsake evil and do good : and, again, the saying which he expressed, that the more a man laboureth the greater reward he shall receive. I wonder why thou hast forgotten all that we spoke about before. We said before, that the Divine Providence wrought every good and no evil, nor appointed any to be made, nor ever made any ; but that indeed we are directed to good.

“ It is thought evil by common people that he should avenge or punish any one for his evil.

“ But ! did we not also say in this same book, that God had appointed freedom to be given to men, and made them free ; and that if they held this freedom well, he would greatly dig-

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nify them with everlasting power; and that if they injured this freedom, that he would then punish them with death?

“ He has appointed, that if they sin in any thing against this freedom, they shall, by penitence, compensate for it, to recover that freedom; and if any of them will be so hard hearted, that he will do no repentance, that he shall then have a just punishment.

“ He has appointed all creatures to be servants, except angels and men, and hence they are the servants of these other creatures. They have their ministerial duties till domes-day. But men and angels they are free. He dispenses with their servitude.

“ What! can men say, that the Divine Providence has appointed this, that they should not fulfil these duties, or how? May they neglect them; that they may not do good? Now it is written that God will render to every man according to his works. Why then should any man be idle, that he work not? —

“ Then said I, ‘ It is obvious enough to me, that God knew it all before, both good and evil, before it happened. But I know not, whether that shall all happen unchangeably, which he knows and has appointed.

“ ‘ Then,’ quoth he, ‘ THERE IS NO NEED THAT ALL SHOULD HAPPEN UNCHANGEABLY: though some of it shall happen unchangeably. This will be that which will be best for our necessities; and that will be his will. But there are some so instructed that there is no necessity for this, and though its being done would neither injure, nor benefit, nor be any harm, yet it will not be done.’

“ ‘ Think now, by thyself, whether thou hast appointed any thing so firmly, that thou thinkest that it shall never be changed by thy will, nor that thou canst be without it: or whether thou again art so divided in opinion, on any thought, whether it shall happen to help thee, or whether it shall not. Many are the things which God knows before they happen; and he knows also whether it will hurt his creatures that they should happen. But he knows not this for the purpose of willing that they should happen, but that he may take previous care that they should not happen. Thus a good ship-steerer perceives many a stormy wind before

it occurs, and folds his sail, and awhile also lays down his mast, and then abides the beating, if, before the threatening of the adverse wind, he can warn himself against the weather." ⁹³

C H A P.
II.

IN this train of original reasoning, it is remarkable, that Alfred's sound and practical understanding has fixed itself on the true solution of this difficult question. The Divine prescience foresees all things that can happen, not that every thing which he foresees should happen; but that he may select out of the possibilities which his foresight anticipates, those things which it will be most beneficial to his creation to take place; nor does he even will these unalterably. He binds himself in no chains. His laws are not, like those of the Medes and Persians, immutable, when the course and changes of circumstances make alteration advisable. "There is no need," as our royal sage intimates, "that all things should unchangeably happen." He felt it to be wiser, from his own experience, to reserve and exercise the right of making new determinations and arrangements as new exigencies occurred; and he has reasonably applied the same principle to the Divine Government. The Deity could make all things unchangeable if he pleased, and could from all eternity have so appointed them. But there was no need for his doing this. It was wiser and more expedient that he should not do

⁹³ Alfred, p. 142—144.

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so. He is under no necessity, at all times, or at any time, to exert all his possibilities of power. He uses on every occasion so much of it as that occasion requires, but no more. He involves himself in no fetters of necessity. He is always doing what it is the best and fittest to do, and reserves to himself the right and the freedom of making at every period whatever new arrangement the progress or the new positions and the welfare of his creation requires.

THUS Alfred has hit upon the real wisdom of opinion on this contested subject, which both theologians and metaphysicians have failed to attain. He could not have left a more impressive instance of the penetrating sagacity of his clear and honest mind.

BOETIUS was advancing to the point but missed it; for he seems to have thought, that whatever was foreseen must occur. Alfred's idea of an exerted foresight to choose from, without the necessity of the thing foreseen therefore unalterably occurring, was a beautiful distinction of his correct judgment.

INSTEAD of the reasoning of Boetius, in the fifth *prosa* of his last book, Alfred substitutes the following of his own.—

On human nature and its best interests.

“ Then, said I, ‘ Thou hast very well helped me by this speech. I wonder why so many wise men should have laboured so much on this subject, and have found out so little that was wise.

“ Then, quoth he, ‘ Why wonderest thou so much? Is it so easy to be understood? How! knowest thou not, that

constructing the Machine of the Kingdon - the
little King - that of who good - but he all

many things are not understood so as they exist ; but according to the quality of the understanding of him that enquires after them. Such is wisdom. No man from this world can understand it, such as it really is ; though every one strives according to the quality of his understanding, that he may perceive it if he can. Wisdom may entirely comprehend us, such as we are, though we may not wholly comprehend that, such as it is in itself ; because wisdom is God. He seeth all our works, both good and evil, before they are done, or for this purpose thought. But he compels us not to this, that we must necessarily do the good ; nor prevents us from doing evil ; because he has given us freedom. I can teach thee also some examples, by which thou mayest the easier understand this speech. What ! thou knowest the sight, and the hearing, and the taste : they perceive the body of man, and yet they perceive it not alike. The ears perceive so that they hear, but they perceive not yet the body entirely as it is ; our sense of feeling must touch it, and feel that it is the body. We cannot feel whether this be black or white, fair or not fair ; but the sight at the beginning turns to these points ; and as the eyes look on things, they perceive all the appearance of the body. But I will give thee some further explanation, that thou mayest know that which thou wonderest at.

“ Then said I, ‘ What is this ? ’

“ He said : ‘ It is that man understands only that which he separately perceives in others. He perceives separately through his eyes ; separately through his ears ; separately through his nostrils ; separately by his reason ; separately by his wise comprehension. There are many living things that are unmoving, such as shell-fish are ; and these have yet some portion of perception ; or they would not else live, if they had no grain of perception. Some can see, some can hear, some taste, some smell ; but the moving animals are more like man, because they have all that the unmoving creatures have, and also more too. This is, that they obey men. They love what loves them, and hate what hates them ; and they fly from what they hate, and seek what they love. But men have all that we have before mentioned, and also

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add to them the great gift of reason. Angels have a still wiser understanding.

“ ‘ Hence are these creatures thus made, that the unmoving shall not exalt themselves above the moving ones, nor contend with them ; nor the moving ones above men ; nor men above angels ; nor angels strive against God.

“ ‘ But this is miserable, that the greatest part of men look not to that which is given to them, that is, reason ; nor seek that which is above them, which is what angels and wise men have ; this is a wise understanding. But most men now move with cattle, in this, that they desire the lusts of the world like cattle. If we now had any portion of an unhesitating understanding, such as angels have, then we might perceive that such an understanding would be much better than our reason. Though we investigate many things, we have little ready knowledge free from doubt. But to angels there is no doubt of any of those things which they know, because their ready knowledge is much better than our reasoning ; as our reasoning is better than the perceptions of animals. Any portion of understanding that is given to them, is either to those that are prone, or to those that are erect. But let us now elevate our minds as supremely as we may towards the high roof of the highest understanding, that thou mayest most swiftly and most easily come to thine own kindred from whence thou camest before. There may thy mind and thy reason see openly that which they now doubt about ;—every thing, whether of the divine prescience, which we have been discoursing on, or of our freedom, or of all such things.’ ”⁹⁴

WHAT an easy flow of reasoning, on topics, which the Aristotelian schoolmen afterwards bewildered without improving !

IF it be interesting to read the philosophical reasonings of great men on the sublime subject of Deity, and on that which constitutes the

⁹⁴ Alfred. p.144—146.

supreme good, it is peculiarly so to observe how Alfred treats of it, when we recollect the age he lived in, and the barbaric minds with which he was surrounded. He has enlarged so copiously on the suggestions of Boetius⁹⁵, added so much to his text, inserted so much vigour of reasoning, and also thrown it so much more into dialogue, that it claims our attention as another specimen of his original composition. He argues and thinks like a platonic philosopher.

“ I would ask thee first one thing. Whether thinkest thou that any thing in this world is so good as that it may give us full happiness? I ask this of thee. I do not wish that any false likeness should deceive you and me, instead of the true comfort; for no man can deny that some good must be the most superior. Just as there is some great and deep fountain, from which many brooks and rivers run. Hence men say of some advantages, that they are not complete good, because there is some little deficiency in them, which they are not entirely without. Yet every thing would go to naught, if it had not some good in it.

On the
Divine
nature.

“ From this you may understand, that from the greatest good come the less goods; not the greatest from the less: no more than the river can be the spring and source, though the spring may flow into a river. As the river may return again to the spring, so every good cometh from God, and returns to him; and he is the full and the perfect good; and there is no deficiency of will in him. Now you may clearly understand that this is God himself.

“ Then answered I, and said, ‘ Thou hast very rightly and very rationally overcome and convinced me. I cannot deny this, nor indeed think otherwise, but that it is all so as thou sayest.’

⁹⁵ The reader may compare, with the king's effusion, Boetius, lib. iii. prosa 10.

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V.

“Then said Wisdom, ‘Now I would that thou shouldest think carefully till thou understand, where true happiness is. How! knowest thou not, that all mankind are with one mind consenting that God is the beginning of all good things, and the governor of all creatures? He is the supreme good. No man now doubts this, because he knows nothing better, and indeed nothing equally good. Hence every reasoning tells us, and all men confess the same, that God is the highest good. Thus they signify that all good is in him; for if it were not, then he would not be that which he is called; but something has existed before him or is more excellent. Then that would be better than he is; but nothing was ever before him; nor more excellent than he is, nor more precious than himself. Hence he is the beginning, and the fountain, and the roof of all good. This is clear enough. Now it is openly shown, that the true felicities are in no other existing thing but in God.’

“Then said I, ‘I am consenting to this.’

“Then he answered, ‘I conjure thee that thou rationally understand this; that God is full of every perfection, and of every good, and of every happiness.’

“I then replied, ‘I cannot fully understand it. Wherefore tell me again, the same that thou didst mention before.’

“He said, ‘Then I will say it again. I would not that thou shouldest think this, that God is the father and the origin of all creatures, and yet that his supreme goodness, of which he is full, comes to him from any where from without. I also would not have thee think that any other can be his good and happiness but himself; because, if thou supposest that the good which he hath, comes to him any where from without, then that thing from which it comes to him would be better than he, if there were such. But it is very silly, and a very great sin, that men should think so of God; either to suppose again, that any thing were before him, or better than he is, or like him. But we should agree that he is the best of all things.

“‘If thou now believest that God exists so as men are, either he is a man that hath soul and body, or his goodness is that which gathereth good elsewhere, and then holds it together, and rules it. If thou then believest that it is so

with God, then shalt thou necessarily believe that some power is greater than his, which it so unites as that it maketh the course of things. But whatever thing is divided from others is distinct, — is another thing, though they may be placed together. If, then, any thing be divided from the highest good, it will not be that highest good. Yet it would be a great sin to think of God that there could be any good without him, or any separated from him. Hence nothing is better than He is, or even as good. What thing can be better than its creator? Hence I say, with juster reason, that He is the supreme good in his own nature, which is the origin of all things.'

"Then I said, 'Now thou hast very rightly convinced me.'

"Then quoth he, 'Did I not before tell thee that the supreme good, and the highest happiness were one?' I answered, 'So it is.' He replied, 'Shall we then say that this is any thing else but God?' I said, 'I cannot deny this; because I assented to it before.'" ⁹⁶

THE following passages are from Alfred's own pen. Speaking of the Deity, he adds: —

"'HE is the stem and the foundation of all blessings. From Him all good cometh, and every thing tends to Him again. He governs them all. Thus HE is the beginning, and the support of all blessings. They come from Him so as the light and brightness of the planets come from the sun: some are brighter, some are less bright. So also the moon; he enlightens as much as the sun shines on him. When she shineth all over him, then is he all bright.'

"When I heard these observations I was then astonished, and much awed, and exclaimed, 'This is a wonderful and delightful, and reasonable observation which thou now expressest to me!'

"He answered, 'It is not more pleasant nor wiser than the thing that thy discourse was about. We will now talk about that; because methinketh it good that we connect this with the former.' Then replied I, 'What is that?'" ⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Alfred, p. 81—83.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 84.

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V.

AFTER this, the concise question of Boetius, whether “the several things of which beatitude consists, do not unite, as it were, in one body of blessedness, with a certain variety of parts, or whether any one of them hath it complete to which the rest may be referred⁹⁸,” is thus amplified and commented upon by Alfred with his own illustrations and reasonings : —

“ ‘ What I expressed to thee before was, that God was happiness; and that from this true felicity come all the other goods that we discoursed about before; and return to Him. Thus from the sea the water cometh into the earth, and there freshens itself. It proceedeth then up into a spring: it goeth then into a brook; then into a river; then along the river till it floweth again into the sea. But I would now ask thee how thou hast understood this assertion? Whether dost thou suppose that the five goods which we have often mentioned before, that is, power, dignities, celebrity, abundance, and bliss;—I would know whether you suppose that those goods were limbs of the true felicity, so as a man’s limbs are those of one person, and belong all to one body? Or dost thou think that some one of the five goods makes the true felicity, and afterwards that the four others become its goods; as now the soul and body compose one man?

“ ‘ The one man hath many limbs, and yet to these two, that is, to the soul and the body, belong all this man’s comforts both spiritual and corporeal. It is now the good of the body that a man be fair and strong, and long and broad, with many other excellences besides these. Yet they are not the body itself; because, though he should lose any of these good things, he would still be what he was before. Then the excellences of the soul are, prudence, moderation, patience, righteousness, and wisdom, and many such virtues; and yet, as the soul is one thing, so the virtues are another.’

“ I then said, ‘ I wish that thou wouldest explain to me

⁹⁸ Boet. lib. iii. pr. 10.

yet more clearly, about the other goods that belong to the true felicity.' CHAP. II.

"He answered, 'Did I not inform thee before that the true happiness is God?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'Thou hast said he was the supreme good.' Then quoth he, 'Art thou now consenting that power, and dignities, and fame, and plenty, and joy, and happiness, and the supreme good, are all one; and that this one must be the Deity?'

"I said, 'How should I now deny this?' Then he answered, 'Whether dost thou think that those things which are the limbs of the true felicity is that felicity itself?'

"I replied, 'I know now what thou wouldest say; but it will please me better that you should speak to me some while about it than ask me.' He then said, 'How! couldest thou not reflect that if these goods were limbs of the true felicity, they would be somewhat distinct from it as a man's limbs are from his body? But the nature of these limbs is that they make up one body, and yet are not wholly alike.'

"I then remarked, 'Thou needest no more speak about it. Thou hast explained it to me clearly enough that these goods are no-whit separated from the true felicity.'

"Then quoth he, 'Thou comprehendest it right enough. Thou now understandest that all good is the same that happiness is, and this happiness is the supreme good, and the supreme good is God, and God is always inseparably one.'

"I said, 'There is no doubt of it. But I wish you now to discourse to me a little on what is unknown.'"⁹⁹

ALL the preceding is the addition of Alfred to the short suggestion already given from Boetius.

SHORTLY after the above occurs the tenth metrum of Boetius¹⁰⁰, which Alfred paraphrases,

⁹⁹ Alfred, p. 84—86.

¹⁰⁰ The original is: "Come here, all ye that are thus captivated; whom deceitful desire, dulling your earthly minds, binds with its wicked chains; here will be rest from your

BOOK or rather imitates, so as to make the whole of it,
 { V. in point of composition, his own, and nearly so
 in its thoughts.

It is Alfred's corollary from the preceding dialogue.

" Well! O men! Well! Every one of you that be free, tend to this good, and to this felicity: and he that is now in bondage with the fruitless love of this world let him seek liberty; that he may come to this felicity. For this is the only rest of all our labours. This is the only port always calm after the storms and billows of our toils. This is the only station of peace; the only comforter of grief after all the sorrows of the present life. The golden stones and the silvery ones, and jewels of all kinds, and all the riches before us, will not enlighten the eyes of the mind, nor improve their acuteness to perceive the appearance of the true felicity. They rather blind the mind's eyes than make them sharper because all things that please here, in this present life, are earthly; because they are flying. But the admirable brightness that brightens all things and governs all, it will not destroy the soul, but will enlighten it. If, then, any man could perceive the splendour of the heavenly light with the pure eyes of his mind, he would then say that the radiance of the shining of the sun is not superior to this, — is not to be compared to the everlasting brightness of God." ¹⁰¹

labours; here, a serene part where you may remain quiet. This is the only asylum open to the wretched. Tagus never gave any thing in its golden sands, nor Hermus from his ruddy bank, or Indus near the heated circle, mingling green with white stones. They blaze to the sight, and the more conceal the blinded mind within their darkness. In this, whatever pleases and excites the mind, the low earth nourishes in its caverns. The splendour with which heaven is governed and flourishes, shuns the obscure ruins of the soul. Whoever can note this light, will deny the bright rays of Phœbus." Boet. lib. iii. met. 10.

¹⁰¹ Alfred, p. 87, 88.

THE last chapter of his Boetius is Alfred's composition. He has taken a few hints from his original ¹⁰², but he has made what he has borrowed his own, by his mode of expression, and he has added from his own mind all the rest. It is a fine exhibition of his enlightened views and feelings on that great subject, which has, in every age, so much interested the truly philosophical mind; and we may add, that no one has contemplated it with more sympathy, rationality, and even sublimity, than our illustrious king. His description of the Deity is entirely his own. —

CHAP.
II.

“Hence we should with all our power enquire after God, that we may know what he is. Though it should not be our lot to know what He is, yet we should from the dignity of the understanding which he has given us, try to explore it.

“Every creature, both rational and irrational, discovers this; that God is eternal. Because so many creatures, so great and so fair, could never be subject to less creatures and to less power than they all are, nor indeed to many equal ones.

“Then said I, ‘What is eternity?’

“He answered, ‘Thou hast asked me a great and difficult thing to comprehend. If thou wilt understand it, thou must first have the eyes of thy mind clean and lucid. I may not conceal from thee what I know of this.

“‘Know thou that there are three things in this world: one is temporary; to this there is both a beginning and an end: and I do not know any creature that is temporary, but hath his beginning and his end. Another thing is eternal which

¹⁰² How few these are may be seen by those who read the last chapter of Boetius. Lib. v. pr. 6.

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V.

hath a beginning, but hath not an end : I know not when it began, but I know that it will never end : such are angels and the souls of men. The third thing is eternal without end, as without beginning : this is God. Between these three there is a very great discrimination. If we were to investigate all this subject we should come late to the end of this book, or never.

“ ‘ But one thing thou must necessarily know of this previously—Why is God called the Highest Eternity?’

“ Then said I, ‘ Why?’

“ Then quoth he, ‘ Because we know very little of that which was before us, except by memory and by asking ; and yet we know less of that which will be after us. That alone exists rationally to us which is present ; but to HIM all is present, as well that which was before, as that which now is ; and that which after us will be. All of it is present to HIM.

“ ‘ HIS riches increase not, nor do they ever diminish. HE never remembers any thing, because HE never forgets aught : HE seeks nothing, nor enquires, because HE knows it all : HE searches for nothing, because HE loses nothing : HE pursues no creature, because none can fly from HIM : HE dreads nothing, because HE knows no one more powerful than Himself, nor even like HIM. HE is always giving, and never wants. HE is always Almighty, because HE always wishes good, and never evil. To HIM there is no need of any thing. HE is always seeing : HE never sleeps : HE is always alike mild and kind : HE will always be eternal. Hence there never was a time that HE was not, nor ever will be. HE is always free. HE is not compelled to any work. From HIS divine power HE is every where present. HIS greatness no man can measure. HE is not to be conceived bodily, but spiritually, so as now wisdom is and reason. But HE is wisdom : HE is reason itself.’ ”¹⁰³

WE can scarcely believe that we are perusing the written thoughts of an Anglo-Saxon of the ninth century, who could not even read till he

¹⁰³ Alfred, p. 147, 148.

was twelve years old ; who could then find no instructors to teach him what he wished ; whose kingdom was overrun by the fiercest and most ignorant of barbarian invaders ; whose life was either continual battle or continual disease ; and who had to make both his own mind and the minds of all about him. How great must have been Alfred's genius, that, under circumstances so disadvantageous, could attain to such great and enlightened conceptions !

CHAP. III.

*ALFRED's Geographical, Historical, Astronomical,
Botanical, and other Knowledge.*

BOOK
V.

His trans-
lation of
Orosius.

ALFRED's translation of Orosius¹ is peculiarly valuable for the new geographical matter which he inserted in it.² This consists of a sketch of the chief German nations in his time, and an account of the voyages of Ohthere to the North Pole, and of Wulfstan to the Baltic, during his reign. Alfred does in this as in all his translations: he omits some chapters, abbreviates others; sometimes rather imitates than translates; and often inserts new paragraphs of his own.

His geo-
graphical
know-
ledge.

It is clear, from these additions, that Alfred was fond of geography, and was active both to increase and to diffuse the knowledge of it.

¹ Orosius ends his summary of ancient history and geography in 416, when he was alive. He quotes some historians now lost; as Claudius on the Roman conquest of Macedonia, and Antias on the war with the Cimbri and Teutones; and appears to have read Tubero's history, and an ancient history of Carthage.

² The principal MS. of Alfred's translation is in the Cotton library, Tiber. b. i., which is very ancient and well written. A transcript of this, with a translation, was printed by Mr. Daines Barrington in 1773.

Some little insertions in his Boetius implied this fact; for he introduces there a notice of the positions of the Scythians³, and derives the Goths from them⁴; and mentions Ptolemy's description of the world.⁵ But it is in his Orosius that the extent of his researches is most displayed. The first part of his original is a geographical summary of the nations and kingdoms of the world in the fifth century. Alfred has interspersed in this some few⁶ particulars, which prove that he had sought elsewhere for the information he loved. Having done this, he goes beyond his original, and inserts a geographical review of Germany, as it was peopled in his time; which is not only curious as coming from his pen, and as giving a chorographical map of the Germanic continent of the ninth century, which is no where else to be met with of that period; but also as exhibiting his en-

³ Alfred's Boet. p. 39.

⁴ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵ Ibid. p. 38. He enlarges on Boetius's account of Etna.

⁶ Thus, Orosius says, Asia is surrounded on three sides by the ocean. Alfred adds, on the south, north, and east. What Orosius calls "our sea," meaning the Mediterranean, Alfred names *Wenbel jæ. Sarmaticus*, he translates *rep-monðjrc*. O. speaks of Albania. A. says it is so named in Latin, "*anð pe hý hatath nu Liobene*." O. mentions the boundaries of Europe; A. gives them in different phrases, mentions the source of the Rhine and Danube, and names the *Cpæn jæ*. Speaking of Gades, he adds, "*On thæm ilcan Wenbel jæ on hýpe Werþenbe iſ Scotlanð*." He adds also of the Tygris, that it flows south into the Red Sea. Several little traits of this sort may be observed.

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larged views and indefatigable intellect. No common labour must have been exerted to have collected, in that illiterate age, in which intercourse was so rare and difficult, so much geographical information. It is too honourable to his memory to be omitted in this delineation of his intellectual pursuits.

Alfred's
notitia of
Germany.

“ Then north against the source of the Donua (Danube), and to the east of the Rhine, are the East Francan; south of them are the Swæfas (Swabians); on the other part of the Danube, and south of them, and to the east, are the Bægthware (Bavarians), in the part which men call ⁷ Regnes-burh; right east of them are the Beme (Bohemians); and to the north-east the Thyringas (Thuringians); north of them are the Eald Seaxan; and north-west of them are the Frysan (Frisians).

“ West of the Eald Seaxum is the mouth of the Ælfe River (the Elbe), and Frysland; and thence west-north is that land which men call Angle and Sillende (Zealand), and some part of Dena (Denmark); north of them is ⁸ Apdrede; and east-north the Wilds that men call Æfeldan; and east of them is Wineda land, that men call Sysyle (Silesians), and south-east over some part Maroaro (the Moravians); and these Maroaro have west of them the Thyringas and Behemas (Bohemians), and half of the Bavarians; south of them, on the other half of the river Danube, is the land Carendre (Carinthia). South to the mountains that men call Alpis. To these same mountains lie the boundaries of the Bavarians' land, and Swabians; and then by the east of Carendra land, beyond the desarts, is Pulgara land (Bul-

⁷ Ratisbon; the Germans call it Regensburgh. The modern names added to this extract are from J. R. Forster's notes. I have in this, as in all the extracts from Alfred's works, made the translation as literal as possible, that his exact phrases may be seen.

⁸ The Obotritæ settled in Mecklenburgh.

garia); east of this is Creca land (Greece); east of Maroaro land is Wisleland⁹; east of this is Datia, where formerly were the Gotta (the Goths).

“ North-east of Maroara are the Dulamensan¹⁰; and east of the Dalomensan are the Horithi; and north of the Dalomensan are the Surpe¹¹; and west of them are the Sysele. North of the Horithi is Mægthaland; and north of Mægthalande is Sermende (the Sarmatæ), to the Riffin (Riphæan) mountains.

“ South-west of the Denum is that arm of the ocean which lieth about the land Brittannia, and north of them is that arm of the sea which men call Ost sea.¹² To the east of them, and to the north of them, are the North Dene, both on the greater lands and on the islands; and east of them are the Afdrede; south of them is the mouth of the river Ælfe, and some part of Eald Seaxna.

“ The North Dene have on their north, that same arm of the sea which men call Ost; and east of them are the¹³ Osti nation, and Afdrede on the south. The Osti have on the north of them the same arm of the sea, and the Winedas and Burgendas¹⁴; and south of them are the Hæfeldan.

“ The Burgendan have the same arm of the sea west of them, and the Sweon (Swedes) on the north; east of them

⁹ Wisleland is that part of Poland which is commonly called Little Poland, for here the Vistula rises, which in Polish is called Wisla.

¹⁰ Dalamensæ are those Sclavonians who formerly inhabited Silesia from Moravia, as far as Glogau, along the Oder. Wittekind calls them Sclavi Dalamanti.

¹¹ The Sorabi, Sorbi, or Sorvi, who lived in Lusatia, and Misnia, and part of Brandenburg and Silesia, below Glogau; their capital was Soraw, a town which still exists. I vary the orthography as the MS. does.

¹² The Germans have for the Baltic no other name than the Ost Sea.

¹³ The same whom Wulfstan calls the Estum. The northernmost part of Livonia still bears the name of Estland.

¹⁴ Bornholm, the contraction of Borgundeholm, Wulfstan calls Burgundaland.

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are the Sermende; south of them are the Surfe. The Sweon have to the south of them the Osti arm of the sea; east of them are the Sermende; and north over the wastes is Cwenland; north-west are the Scride Finnas; and west, the Northmenn."

SUCH is the notitia of Germany, which Alfred has inserted in his Orosius. As it displays the ideas of an inquisitive king, on the positions of the German nations in the ninth century, it is valuable to geographers.

To this delineation of Germany, Alfred adds an interesting account of the voyage of Ohthere towards the North Pole¹⁵, and of the voyage of Wulfstan in the Baltic. As it is the king's composition, and gives a curious sketch of several nations in the ninth century, we think it a duty to insert it.

" Ohthere said to his lord, king Ælfred, that he abode the northmost of all the Northmen. He declared, that he abode on those lands northward against the West Sea. He said, that that land is very long to the north, and is all waste, except in few places; the Finnas dwell scattered about; they hunt in winter, and in summer they fish in the sea.

" He said, that on some occasion he wished to find out how long that land stretched to the north, or whether any man abode to the north of those wastes. Then went he right north of those lands, leaving the waste land all the way on the starboard, and the wide sea on the back-board (lar-board). He was for three days as far north as the whale hunters farthest go. Then went he yet right north as far as

¹⁵ Whoever now reads Ohthere's voyage, will hardly think it possible that any one could have so mistaken it, as to say it was a voyage to discover a *northern passage to the East Indies*. Yet so Mallet and Voltaire have represented it.

he might sail for three other days; the land bent there right east, or the sea in on that land; he knew not whether; but he knew, that he there expected a west wind, or a little to the north. He sailed thence east of the land, so as he might in four days sail. Then should he there abide a right north wind, because that land inclined right south, or the sea in on that land, he knew not whether. (He knew not whether it was a mere bay or the open sea.)

“ Then sailed he thence right south of the land, so as he might in five days sail. Then lay there a great river up in that land. Then returned they up from that river, because they durst not sail forth on that river from hostility, for that land was all inhabited on the other side of the river. Nor had he met before any inhabited land, since he went from his own home, but to him all the way was waste land on the starboard, except the fishers, fowlers, and hunters; and these were all Finnas: on his larboard, there was a wide sea.

“ The Beormas had very well inhabited their land, and he durst not come there; but Terfinna land was all waste, except where the hunters, or the fishers, or the fowlers settled.

“ The Beormas told him many accounts both of their own lands, and of the lands that were about them; but he knew not what was truth, because he did not see it himself. He thought the Finnas and the Beormas nearly spoke one language. He went chiefly thither to each of these lands looking for the horse whales, because they have very good bone in their teeth. He brought some of the teeth to the king; the hides are very good for ship ropes. These whales are much less than the other whales; they are not longer than seven ells long.

“ On his own land are the best whales hunted; they are forty-eight ells long, and the largest fifty ells. Of these, he said, that he was one of six who slew sixty in two days.

“ He was a very wealthy man in those possessions that be their wealth; that is, in wild deer. He had then yet when he sought the king 600 unbought tame deer; these deers they call hranas (rain-deer). There were six decoy hranas; they are very dear amid the Finnas, because they take the wild hranas with them.

“ He was amid the first men in those lands, though he had

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not more than twenty horned cattle, and twenty sheep, and twenty swine; and the little that he ploughed, he ploughed with horses. But their wealth is most in those gafol that the Finnas pay to them. These gafol are in deer skins, and in birds' feathers, and whales' bones, and in the ship ropes that be made of the whales' hides, and of seals.

" Every one pays according to his birth. The best born (or richest) shall pay fifteen martens' skins, and five hrasas, and one bear skin, and ten ambra of feathers, and a kyrtel of bears' or otters' skin, and two ship ropes, each to be sixty ells long; some are made of whales' hide, some of seals.

" He said, that Northmanna land was very long and very small; all that men could use of it for pasture or plough, lay against the sea, and even this is in some places very stony. Wild moors lay against the east, and along the inhabited lands. In these moors the Finnas dwell.

" The inhabited land is broadest eastward, but northward becomes continually smaller. Eastward, it may be sixty miles broad, or a little broader; midway thirty or broader; and to the north, he said, where it was smallest, it might be three miles broad to the moors. The moors are in some places so broad, that a man might be two weeks in passing over them. In some places their breadth was such that a man might go over them in six days.

" Even with these lands, southward, on the other side of the moors is Sweo-land; to that land, northward, and even with those northward lands, is Cwenaland. The Cwenas make depredations, sometimes on the Northmen over the moors (sometimes the Northmen on them); and there are many great fresh lakes over these moors, and the Cwenas carry their ships overland to the lakes, and thence plunder the Northmen. They have ships very little and very light.

" Ohthere said, the shire was called Halgoland that he abode in. He declared that no man abode north of him. There is one port on the southward of these lands; this men call Sciringes-heale; thither he said a man might not sail in a month, if he rested at night, and every day had a favourable wind: all the while he shall sail by the land and on the star-board, the first to him would be Iraland, and then the islands

that are betwixt Iraland and this land; then is this land till he comes to Sciringes-heale.

CHAP.
III.

“ All the way on the larboard is Norway; against the south of Scirenges-heale a very great sea falleth upon that land. It is broader than any man may see over. Gotland is opposite on the other side, afterwards Sillende. The sea lieth many hundred miles up in on that land.

“ He said, he sailed from Sciringes-heale in five days to that port which men call æt Hethum. It stands between the Winedum and Saxons and Angles, and belongs to Denmark.

“ When he thitherward sailed from Sciringes-heale, Denmark was on his larboard, and on his starboard was a wide sea for three days; and then two days before he came to Hæthum. Gothland was on his starboard, and Sillende and many islands; on those lands the Engle dwelt before they came to this country; and for two days the islands were on his larboard that belong to Denmark.”

THIS voyage of Ohthere presents us with an interesting and authentic picture of the manners and political state of a great portion of the north. The next is the voyage of Wulfstan towards the east of the Baltic.

“ Wulfstan said, that he went from Hæthum; that in seven days and nights he was in Truso; that the ship was all the way running under sail. Weonothland was to him on the starboard, and on his larboard was Langaland and Leland, and Falster and Sconeg, and all these lands belong to Denmark; and then Burgenda land was to us on the larboard, and they have to themselves a king. Wulfstan's voyage.

“ Then after Burgenda land were to us those lands that were called first Blecinga-eg and Meore, and Eowland and Gotland, on the larboard. These lands belong to Sweon. Weonod land was all the way to us on starboard to the mouth of the Wisla. The Wisla is a very great river, and towards it lieth Witland and Weonod land. This Witland

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belongeth to the Estum, and the Wisle flows out of Weonodland, and flows in the East Lake. The East Lake is at least fifteen miles broad.

“ Then cometh the Ilfing east into the East Lake. Truso stands on the banks of this lake, and the Ilfing cometh out in East Lake, east of Eastlande, together with the Wisla south of Winodland; and then Wisla takes away the name of Ilfing, and tends west of this lake, and north into the sea; therefore men call it the mouth of the Wisla.

“ This Eastlande is very large, and there be a great many towns, and in every town there is a king; and there is a great quantity of honey and fish. The king and the richest men drink mare’s milk, and the poor and the slaves drink mead. There be very many battles between them. There is no ale brewed amid the Estum, but there is mead enough.

“ And there is a custom amid the Estum, that when there is a man dead, he lieth within, unburnt, a month amid his relations and friends—sometimes two months; and the kings and the other principal men so much longer, as they have more wealth: sometimes they be half a year unburnt. They lie above the earth in their house, and all the while that the body is within, there shall be drink and plays until the day that they burn them.

“ Then the same day that they choose to bear them to the pile, his property that remains after this drink and play is divided into five or six parts, sometimes more, as the proportion of his wealth admits. They lay these along, a mile apart, the greatest portion from the town, then another, then a third, till it be all laid at one mile asunder; and the least part shall be nearest to the town where the dead man lieth.

“ Then shall be collected all the men that have the swiftest horses in the land, for the way of five miles or six miles from the property. Then run they all together to the property. Then cometh the man that hath the swiftest horse to the farthest portion and to the greatest, and so on one after the other, till all be taken away; he taketh the least who is nearest the town, and runs to it; then each rides away with his prize, and may have it all; and because of this custom the swift horse is inconceivably dear.

“ And when the wealth is all thus spent, then they bear the man out and burn him, with his weapons and garments. Most frequently all his wealth is spent during the long lying of the dead man within. What they lay by the way, strangers run for and take it. C H A P.
III.

“ This is the custom with the Estum, that the men of every nation shall be burnt; and if a man finds a bone unburnt, it much enrages him. There is with the Estum the power of producing cold, so that there the dead man may lie thus long and not be foul; and they make such cold among them, that if any one sets two vessels full of ale or water, they so do that these shall be frozen the same in summer as in winter.¹⁶

THE attachment of Alfred to history appears, from his translations of Orosius's Abridgment of the History of the World, and of Bede's History of the Anglo-Saxon Nation, and from his short sketch of the History of Theodoric the Gothic King, by whose order Boetius was confined.¹⁷ But from the want of proper books, Alfred's acquaintance with ancient history appears, from his allusions to it in his Boetius¹⁸, to have been but slight, and not always accurate. His histo-
rical know-
ledge.

¹⁶ For a commentary on this periplus, the reader may consult 2 Langbeck's Script. Dan. p. 106—123., and the notes of Mr. Foster added to Barrington's Orosius. As it would occupy too large a portion of this work to do it justice, I have not attempted it here.

¹⁷ Alf. Boet. p. 1.

¹⁸ Thus he mentions, p. 39., Cicero's other names; touches on the Trojan war, p. 114.; on the Hydra, p. 126.; notices Virgil, p. 140.; and adds a few additional circumstances in other places, to the names of the persons mentioned by Boetius.

BOOK
V.His trans-
lation of
Bede.

HIS great historical work was his Version of Bede's history into Saxon.¹⁹ In this he omits or abridges sometimes single passages, and sometimes whole chapters. He frequently gives the sense of the Latin in fewer and simpler words; but he for the most part renders his original with sufficient exactness. The style of the translation is more stately²⁰ than the dialogues of his Boetius, and therefore has not the charm of their lively ease and graceful freedom; but it shows the variety of his powers of composition.

His astro-
nomy.

HIS attention to astronomy appears from his translation of a metrum of Boetius, in which he rather imitates than translates his original, and expresses a few more astronomical ideas than he found there.²¹

¹⁹ This translation was formerly published by Wheloc, from three MSS., two at Cambridge, and one in the Cotton Library; but the best edition of it is that appended by Smith to his Latin Bede, Cantab. 1722, with the various readings and a few notes. Alfred's translation is mentioned by Elfric, who lived in 994, in his Anglo-Saxon Homily on St. Gregory, "and eac ȝtopia Anglōpūm tha the Ælfeþeð cýning of Leben on Engljrc apenð." Elstob. Sax. Hom. p. 2.

²⁰ Dr. Hickes says of it, that neither Cæsar nor Cicero ever wrote more perfectly in the middle species of composition. Pref. Gram. Angl. Sax. This is too warm an encomium for a translation.

²¹ The passage in Boetius is: "If any one should not know that the stars of Arcturus glide near the pole; or why Boetes slowly drives his wain, and immerses his fires late in the sea, while he urges rapid their ascent; he will wonder at the law of the lofty sky. The horns of the full moon may

“ Which of the unlearned wonder not at the journeying and swiftness of the firmament? How he every day revolves round all this world, outside! Or who does not admire that some stars have shorter revolutions than others have, as the stars have that we call the Waggon-shafts? They have a short circuit, because they are near the north end of that axis on which all the firmament revolves. Or, who is not amazed, except those only who know it, that some stars have a longer circuit than others have, and the longest, those which revolve round the axis midway, as now Boeties doth? So the planet Saturn comes not to where he was before till about thirty winters. Or, who does not wonder at some stars departing under the sea, as some men think the sun doth, when she goeth to rest? But she is not nearer the sea than she was at mid-day. Who is not amazed at this, that the full moon is covered over with darkness? or, again, that the stars shine before the moon, but do not shine before the sun?

“ They wonder at this²² and many such like things, and do not wonder that men and all living animals have perpetual and unnecessary enmities betwixt themselves. Or, why should they wonder at this, that it sometimes thunders, and sometimes that there begins a conflict of the sea and the winds, and the waves and the land? or why that this should be; and again, that the sun should shine according to his own nature? But the unsteady folk wonder enough at that which they most seldom see, though this is less surprising.

grow pale, affected by the departure of the dark night, and Phebe, overshadowed herself, discovers the stars which her radiant face had concealed. A general error then disturbs the nations, and they tire their cymbals with frequent blows.”

²² “ Yet no one wonders that the breath of the north-west wind beats the shore with the raging wave, nor that the frozen mass of snow is dissolved by the fervor of Phebus. Here the mind is alert to perceive causes; there the unknown disturbs it, and what is rare amazes the moveable vulgar. Let the errors of ignorance depart with their clouds, and the wonderful cease to amaze. Boet. lib. iv. met. 5.

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They think that all else is but old creation, but that the casual is something new. Yet, when they become curious and begin to learn, if God takes from their mind the folly that it was covered with before, then they wonder not at many things which now amaze them.”²³

THIS latter part, in which he has enlarged upon his concise original, shows how much his mind rose above the superstitions both of his own times and of the ancient world on the phenomena of nature.

His botanical
knowledge.

THE additions which he has made to a passage in Boetius show that botany, as then known had been an object of his attention and acquisition. The sentences in italics are the additions of Alfred, and evince that he had interested himself with studying the progress of vegetation, as far as its process was then known, and as its principles could from that knowledge be understood:—

“ I said, I cannot understand of any living thing; of that which knows what it will and what it does not will, that un-compelled it should desire to perish; because every creature wishes to be healthy and to live, of those that I think alive; excepting that I know not how it may be with trees and herbs, and such substances that have no soul.”

“ Then he smiled and said, ‘ Thou needest not doubt it of these creatures, any more than of others. *How! canst thou not see, that every herb and every tree grows on the richest land that best suits it, and that is natural and customary to it, and there it hastens to grow the most quickly, that it may, and the latest decays. The soil of some herbs and some woods is on hills; of some in marshes; of some in moors; of some on rocks; some on bare sands.*

²³ Alf. Boet. p. 125, 126.

“ ‘ Take any wood or herb whatsoever thou wilt from the place that is its earth and country to grow on, and set it in a place unnatural to it, then it will not grow there, but will fade away; for the nature of every land is, that it nourishes like herbs and like trees; and it so doeth, that it defends and sustains them very carefully, so long as it is their nature that they may grow.

“ ‘ What thinkest thou? Hence every seed grows within the earth, and becometh grass and roots in the earth without. For this, they are appointed, that the stem and the stalk may fasten and longer stand.

“ ‘ Why canst thou not comprehend, though thou mayest not see it, that all the portion of these trees, which increases in twelve months, begins from their roots, and so groweth upwards to the stem, and then along the pith, and along the rind to the stalk, and thence afterwards to the boughs, till it springs out into leaves, and blossoms, and fruit.

“ ‘ Why may you not understand, that every living thing is tenderest inward, and its unbroken outside the hardest? Thou canst see how the trees are clothed without, and protected by their bark against winter, and against stark storms, and also against the sun’s heat in summer. Who may not wonder at such works of our Creator, and not less of their Creator? And though we may admire it now, which of us can properly explain our Creator’s will and power, and how his creatures increase and again decline? When that time cometh, it occurs again, that from their seed they are renewed. They then become regenerated, to be what they then should be again, and become also in this respect alike: such they will be for ever, for every year their regeneration goes on.”²⁴

THE book written by Pope Gregory, for the instruction of the bishops of the church, called his *Liber Pastoralis Curæ*, was much valued in Christendom at that period.²⁵ It was the best

His translation of Gregory’s pastorals.

²⁴ Alf. Boet. p. 89, 90. Boet. lib. iii. pr. 11.

²⁵ Alcuin twice praises it. The council of Toledo ordered that it should be studied by all bishops.

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book at that time accessible to him, by which he could educate his higher clergy to fulfil their duties²⁶; and though it tends to make them too inquisitive into human actions, and would insensibly lead them to erect a tyranny over the human mind, incompatible with its improvement or its happiness; yet as it contains many moral counsels and regulations, and was written by the Pope, who was called the Apostle of the English, and no other book was then at his hand which was equally popular or likely to be as effectual, it was an act of patriotism and philanthropy in the king to translate it.²⁷

Dialogues
of Gre-
gory.

It was not Alfred, but his Bishop Werefrith, who translated the Dialogues of Gregory. The king directed the translation, and afterwards recommended it to his clergy.²⁸ The subjects are chiefly the miracles stated to be performed in Italy by religious men. They display the pious feeling of the age, but these words comprise almost the whole of their merit; for the

²⁶ The MSS. of it in the Cotton Library, Tiber, B. 11., was supposed to be the copy which Plegmund possessed. It is nearly destroyed by fire. There is another ancient MS. of it in the Bodleian, Hatton, 88.

²⁷ Alfred had complained to Fulco, archbishop of Rheims, that "the ecclesiastical order, from the frequent irruptions and attacks of the Northmen, or from age, or the carelessness of the prelates and the ignorance of the people, had declined in many." Ep. Fulc. p. 124.

²⁸ Alfred's recommendation of this work appears in the preface which he prefixed to it, and which is printed by Wanley, p. 71., from the Bodleian MS. Hatton, 100.

piety is unhappily connected with so much ignorance, superstition, credulity, and defective reasoning, that we are surprised it should have interested the attention of Alfred. But as it had not then been determined what was true, or what was false, in history, geography, philology, or philosophy, criticism was not at that time practicable. The weight of evidence, the natural guide of the human belief, was then its only criterion; and as Gregory professed to relate what he himself had known concerning perfect and approved men, or what he had received from the attestations of good and faithful persons, these legends seemed to have an adequate support of human testimony. We are now wise with the experience, thought, reading, comparisons, and inferences of a thousand additional years; and with this knowledge, the slowly-formed creation of so many centuries beyond the time of Alfred, we can detect those errors of judgment and of vulgar tradition, which he had no materials that enabled him to question. Let us, however, not impeach our Anglo-Saxon ancestors for peculiar credulity, nor consider it as an index of their barbarism. They believed nothing on these points, but such things as came recommended to them by the analogous belief of the classical and Roman empire which had preceded them. What Athens and Rome alike supposed of the powers and agencies of their gods and goddesses, heroes,

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demons, and genii, the imperial Christians attributed to their saints and most venerated clergy. Pope Gregory was not more credulous in his religion than the emperor Julian was in his paganism; or Apuleius, and perhaps even Lucian, in common with his age, of ²⁹ witchcraft; Philostratus, Jamblichus, Porphyry, Ammonius, and other heathen philosophers, of the third and fourth centuries, in their belief of the miracles achieved by the sages whom they patronised ³⁰, were the precursors of the Catholic biographers of their respected saints; and our Alfred may be pardoned for following the stream, not only of his own age, but of the most cultivated classical periods, in believing such wonders on the authority of Gregory, which every age of the world had concurred to admit to be both practicable and practised, by those whom its different sects and parties revered. With such sanction, from both philosophical and popular belief, it then seemed irrational to doubt them.³¹ One of Alfred's favourite objects

²⁹ Julian's works show abundant evidences of his credulity, and Lucian describes the powers of witchcraft as fully, and with as much seriousness, as Apuleius.

³⁰ See Philostratus's Life of Appollonius Tyanæus; Jamblichus's Life of Pythagoras; Porphyry's *de antro nympha-rum*, and other remains; and for other philosophers, see Brucker and his abridger Enfield's History of Philosophy.

³¹ So much self-delusion and mistake have been connected with miracles; so many are resolvable into accidents, natural agencies, imagination, false perceptions, erroneous judgments, and popular exaggeration, independent of wilful

was the moral improvement of his people. He wisely considered religion to be the most efficacious instrument of his benevolence, and Gregory's dialogues were as adapted to excite pious feelings at that time, as they would now operate rather to diminish them. We feel that piety allied with nonsense or with falsehood, only degrades the Majestic Being whom it professes to extol. He whose wisdom is the most perfect intelligence and the fountain of all knowledge to us; He whose creations display a sagacity that has no limit but space, and which appears in forms as multifarious as the countless objects that pervade it, should be adored with our sublimest reason and knowledge united with our purest sensibility. Alfred possessed this noble feeling in its full aspiration, but he was compelled to use the materials which his age afforded. He chose the best within his reach, which was all that was within his power. That they were not better was his misfortune, but leaves no imputation on his judgment.

IN the Cotton Library there is an Anglo-Saxon MS. of some selections from St. Austin's soliloquies ³², or, as the MS. expresses it, "The

Alfred's
selections
from
St. Austin.

falsehood, that the cautious mind will believe none but those mentioned in the Scriptures, as no others have that accumulation of evidence both direct and inferential, which impresses these upon our belief.

³² It is in Vitellius, A. 15. After three pages of preface, it

BOOK gathering of the flowers," from St. Austin's
 V. work. At the end of these flowers is this im-
 perfect sentence, "Here end the sayings that
 king Alfred selected from those books that we
 call —." ³³ Here the MS. terminates.

His Psal-
 ter.

MALMSBURY mentions that Alfred began to
 translate the Hymns of David, but that he had
 hardly finished the first part when he ³⁴ died.
 There are many MSS. of the Anglo-Saxon
 translation of the Psalter extant ³⁵; but it is not

says, "Angustinuſ Captama biceop pophte ꝥa bæc be hiſ
 eȝnum ȝechance; tha bæc ȝint ȝehatene ſolliquopum tha
 iſ be modeſ pineaunge ȝ tpeounȝa."

³³ Æp enbiath tha cwiðar the Elþeð Kining alæſ of thæpe
 hæc the ȝe hatath on — MS. p. 56. Wanley ſays of this
 MS. "Tractatus iſte quondam fuit eccleſiæ, B. Mariæ de
 Suwika ut patet ex fol. 2. litteris Normonno-Saxonicis poſt
 conquæſtum ſcriptus," p. 218. A tranſcript of this MS.
 made by Junius, is in the Bodleian Library, Jun. 70., and
 this has the ſame abrupt ending. Wanley, 96.

³⁴ Psalterium transferre aggreſſus vix prima parte expli-
 cata vivendi finem fecit. Malmsb. 45.

³⁵ Wanley ſays, p. 182., there is a MS. very elegantly
 written about the time of Ethelſtan, which contains Jerome's
 Latin Psalter, with an interlineary Saxon verſion, in the
 King's Library. There is another interlineary verſion
 in the Cotton Library, Vesp. A. 1. written 1000 years ago,
 very elegantly, in capital letters. Wanley, 222. There is
 another written before the conqueſt in Tiberius, C. 6. p. 234.
 This contains many figures of muſical inſtruments, alleged
 to be Jewiſh, and ſeveral coloured drawings on religious
 ſubjects. There is another interlineary verſion in the Lam-
 beth Library, written in Edgar's reign, or a little before,
 which contains the curious and valuable addition of ancient
 muſical notes. Wanley, 268. Spelman has published an
 Anglo-Saxon Psalter.

in our power to discriminate the performance of
Alfred.

C H A P.
III.

THAT the king translated the Bible or Testament into Anglo-Saxon has been stated on some authorities, but the selections which he made for his own use appear to have been confounded with a general translation.³⁶

His Bible.

IN the Harleian Library there is a MS. of a translation of fables, styled Æsop's, into French romance verse. At the conclusion of her work, the author³⁷ asserts that Alfred the king translated the fables from the Latin into English, from which version she turned them into French verse.³⁸ Mary, the French translator, lived in

His Æsop.

³⁶ Flor. Wig. says, that in 887, on the Feast of St. Martin he began it. It is clear, on comparing the passages, that he only meant what Asser had mentioned, p. 57., that he then began to translate some parts. The History of Ely asserts, that he translated all the Bible; but Boston of Bury says, that it was "almost all the Testament," Spelman's Life, p. 213. Yet as no MSS. of such a work have been seen, we cannot accredit the fact beyond the limits mentioned in the text.

³⁷ This author was Mary, an Anglo-Norman poetess. She states herself to have been born in France, and she seems to have visited England. The thirteenth volume of the Archæologia, published by the Antiquarian Society, contains a dissertation upon her life and writings, by the Abbé La Rue, p. 36—67.

³⁸ Mary's words are:—

“ Por amur le cunte Willame
Le plus vaillant de nul realme
Meinteneur de cest livre feire
E del Engleis en romans treire
Æsope apelum cest livre

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the thirteenth century. The evidence of her assertion, as to Alfred being the English translator of the fables, can certainly only have the force of her individual belief; and as this belief may have been merely founded on popular tradition, it cannot be considered as decisive evidence. Such an assertion and belief, however, of an authoress of the thirteenth century, must be allowed to have so much weight as to be entitled to notice here.³⁹ The completest MS. of Mary's

Qu'il translata e fist escrire
Del griu en Latin le turna
Li reis Alurez qui mut lama
Le translata puis en Engleis.
E ieo lai rimee en Franceis."

Harl. MS. 978. p. 87.

³⁹ Mons. La Rue thinks, that Alfred was not the author of the English translation which Mary used. His reasons are by no means conclusive: 1st. Asser mentions no translations of Alfred's, and therefore his omission of Æsop is of no consequence. 2d. Though Malmsbury does not particularize Æsop among the translations he enumerates, this argument is indecisive, because Malmsbury expressly states, that the king translated more books than those which he enumerates. His words are, "*Denique plurimam partem Romanæ Bibliothecæ Anglorum auribus dedit,—cujus præcipui sunt libri Orosius,*" &c. Malmsbury only names the chief of his translations; a monk would have hardly ranked Æsop in this honourable class. 3d. The abbé's doubt, whether Mary could, in the thirteenth century, have understood Alfred's language, is of no great force, because we cannot think it unlikely that there should be persons in England who knew both Norman and Saxon, or that Mary should have learnt Saxon if she wished it. 4th. As to the feudal expressions which Mary uses, as we have not the English MSS. which she translated, and therefore cannot know what

translation contains an hundred and four fables, out of which thirty-one only are *Æsop's*.⁴⁰

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III.

BUT it would seem that Alfred's extensive mind had even condescended to write on one of the rural sports of his day, for in the catalogue of the MSS. which in 1315, were in the Christ Church library, we find a treatise of this king on keeping hawks mentioned. "*Liber Alured, regis de custodiendis accipitribus.*"⁴¹ This book corresponds with the fact mentioned by Asser, that Alfred was accustomed "to teach his falconers and hawkers, and hound-trainers."⁴²

It has been declared that the Parables of Alfred had great edification, beauty, pleasantry, and nobleness.⁴³ It is a great loss to our curiosity, perhaps to our education, that we have not these tales, or moral apologues, which were existing in the reign of Henry the Second.⁴⁴

ALFRED is also praised for his excellence in proverbial sayings.⁴⁵ Some collections of this

were the actual expressions in that, I think no argument can be rested on them. Alfred, in his Boetius, puts king in one place, and heretogas in another, for Roman consuls.

⁴⁰ Archæologia, p. 53.

⁴¹ Wanley's preface.

⁴² Asser, 43.

⁴³ So the MSS. Chron. Joan. Oxenedes says:

"*Parabolæ ejus plurimum habentes edificationis, venustatis, jocunditatis et nobilitatis.*" Cott. Lib. MSS. Nero, D. 2.

⁴⁴ Ail. Riev., who then lived, declares, "*Extant parabolæ ejus,*" &c., using nearly the same words as Oxenedes, p. 355.

⁴⁵ "In proverbiiis ita enituit ut nemo post illum amplius." Ann. Eccl. Wint. 1 Angl. Sacra, p. 289. Some of these

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sort have been noticed by his biographer, Spelman, which may perhaps contain some of his ideas as they were preserved by tradition, and in a later age committed to writing; but they are probably not wholly in the phrases of his own composition.⁴⁶

OF Alfred's manual or memorandum book, which seems to have existed in Malmsbury's days⁴⁷, and which would have been such a

are noticed in the old English dialogue between the owl and the nightingale.

⁴⁶ One of these, the least likely to be Alfred's, may be seen in Dr. Hickes's Anglo-Saxon Grammar, p. 222. The other, which suits better Alfred's wisdom, has been quoted by Spelman, in his Life of Alfred, and translated from the MS. in the Cotton Library. See p. 94. of Walker's edition, and 127. of Hearne's. Spelman's extracts may be more valued, as the Cotton MS. Galba, A. 19. was ruined by the fire which destroyed much valuable antiquity.

⁴⁷ Malmsbury's references to this, show, that it was not a mere receptacle for devout extracts, but was rather a general common-place book; for he cites from it some traits of biography, and observations on a piece of poetry. "Qui enim legit manualement librum regis Elfredi, reperiet Kenterum Beati Aldhelmi patrum non fuisse regis Inæ germanum sed arctissima necessitudine consanguineum," lib. v. De Pont. 341. Again, speaking of Aldhelm, he says, he cultivated Anglo-Saxon poetry, "Adeo ut, teste libro Elfredi, de quo superius dixi, nullo unquam ætate par ei fuerit quisquam poesin Anglicam posse facere, tantum componere, eadem apposite vel canere vel dicere. Denique commemorat Elfriedus carmen triviale quod adhuc vulgo cantatur Aldelmum fecisse." By the next paragraph, Alfred seems to have reasoned upon the subject. His manual was therefore the repository of his own occasional literary reflections; for Malmsbury adds, speaking still of Alfred, *Adjiciens causam*.

curiosity to modern times, not even a remnant has been found. CHAP.
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THE genius of Alfred was not confined to literature: it also extended to the arts; and in three of these, architecture, ship-building, and gold and silver workmanship, he obtained an excellence which corresponded with his other talents. His taste
in the arts.

ASSER mentions, that he caused edifices to be constructed from his own new designs, more venerable and precious than those which his predecessors had raised.⁴⁸ These not only consisted of halls and royal apartments, made of wood or stone, in pursuance of his directions, to the surprise of his contemporaries, but he also formed cities and towns, some of which he repaired, and others built; some he destroyed on their ancient sites, to raise them of stone, in positions more useful and appropriate.⁴⁹ He was so earnest in these improvements, that he procured from many nations numerous artificers, versed in every sort of building, and he regularly appropriated a sixth of his yearly re- Architec-
ture.

qua probet rationabiliter, tantum virum his quæ videantur frivola, instituisse populum eo tempore semibarbarum, parum divinis sermonibus intentum, statim cantatis missis, cursitare solitum," p. 342.

⁴⁸ Et ædificia supra omnem antecessorum suorum consuetudinem venerabiliora et pretiosiora nova sua machinatione facere. Asser, 43.

⁴⁹ Asser, 58.

BOOK venues to pay their expences, and remunerate
 V. their labour.⁵⁰

Ship-
building.

His talent and cultivation of naval architecture have been already noticed.

Work-
manship
in gold.

HE also taught his artisans and workers in gold⁵¹, and, by his instructions, occasioned many things to be incomparably executed (we use the epithet of his contemporary) in gold and silver.⁵² One specimen of his talent in this art yet exists to us in a jewel of gold, which was found near Athelney.⁵³

IN the less valuable pursuits of hunting, falconry, hawking, and coursing, he was also distinguished.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Asser, 66.

⁵¹ Ibid. 43.

⁵² Ibid. 58.

⁵³ On one side is a rude outline of a human figure apparently sitting, and holding what seem like two flowers. On the other side is a flower; it is much ornamented, and the workmanship is said to be excellent. The inscription expresses, that it was made by Alfred's orders.

⁵⁴ Asser, 43.

CHAP. IV.

ALFRED's Poetical Composition.

TO the other accomplishments of his mind CHAP.
IV.
 Alfred endeavoured to add that of poetry. Fond of Saxon poems from his infancy, he found a pleasure in attempting to compose them; and the metrum of Boetius afforded him the opportunity of practising his powers of language in this interesting art.

THE great characteristic of Saxon versification was the position of a few words in short lines, with a rythmical effect. As far as we can now discern, there were no rules of artificial prosody to be observed; but the ear was to be gratified by a rythm or musical effect in the pronunciation; and any brief sequence of syllables that would produce this pleasure was used and permitted.

It would be presumptuous, now that the Anglo-Saxon has so long ceased to be spoken, to decide peremptorily on the merit of Alfred's versification, which must have depended so much on the colloquial tones and cadences of his day. But as far as can be judged from a comparison of it with the compositions of Cedmon; the

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odes in the Saxon chronicle; and the poem on Beowulf, it has not their general strength and fulness of rhythm. Though at times sufficiently successful, it is weaker and less elevated than their style, and is not often much more musical than his own prose. Of its poetical feeling and mind we can better judge, as he has translated the metrum also into prose; and it may be said, without injustice, that his verse has less intellectual energy than his prose. The diction is amplified to admit of its being made nearer to poetry, but it is rather diluted than improved. Here and there a few expressions of greater vigour occur, but, in general, the prose is not only more concise, but also more spirited, and more clear.

YET it is only in comparison with his own prose that the merit of Alfred's poetry is thus questioned. His superior intellect in imitating and emulating, and sometimes passing beyond his original, has given it a value of thought and feeling; an infusion of moral mind; and a graceful ease of diction, which we shall look for in vain, to the same degree and effect, among the other remains of the Anglo-Saxon poetry.

THE reader who compares the description of the Golden Age, and the stories of Eurydice and Circe, inserted before from Alfred's prose, with his translations of the same into verse, will perceive that his poetry has not increased their interest. They are too long to be inserted here.

But it will be a just respect to his memory to insert some of his other versifications of the metrum of Boetius, as specimens of the usual style of his poetical diction. He has so amplified and varied his originals as to make much of them his own compositions. The amount of the poetry of the king's mind will best appear from comparing the following effusions with the originals in Boetius, which are also given :

CHAP.
IV.

ON SERENITY OF MIND.

Alfred.

Thou mightest of the sun
Manifestly think ;
And of all the other stars ;
Of those that behind cities
Shine the brightest,
That if before them wan
The atmosphere should hang,
They cannot then
Send forth the beams of their
light
While the thick mist prevails.

So often the mild sea,
Clear as grey glass,
The southern wind
Grimly disturbs ;
Then mingle
The mighty waves :
The great whales rear up.
Then rough, that becomes
Which before serene
Was to the sight.

So often a spring
Wells up from a hoary cliff,
Cool and clear,

Boetius.

With black clouds hidden,
no light can the stars emit.
Lib. i. met. 7.

If the rolling sea the tur-
bid south wind should mingle,
the wave, before glassy and
serene, sordid with diffused
mud, would obstruct the
sight, Ibid.

As wandering from the
lofty mountains, the devious
river is often resisted by the

BOOK
V.*Alfred.**Boetius.*

And flows spacious right on. obstructing stone, loosened
 It runneth over the earth from the rock. Lib. i. met. 7.
 Till it gets within it.
 Great stones from the moun-
 tains fall,
 And in the midst of it
 Lie, trundled
 From the rock.
 In two parts afterwards
 It becomes divided.
 The transparent is disturbed ;
 The streams mingle ;
 The brook is turned aside
 From its right course,
 Flowing into rivers.

So now the darkness
 Of thy heart
 Will of my light
 The doctrine withstand,
 And thy mind's thoughts
 Greatly disturb.
 But if now thou desirest
 That thou mayest well
 This true light clearly know ;
 To believe in that light
 Thou must dismiss
 The idle excess of riches :
 Unprofitable joy.
 Thou must also the evil
 Fear wholly dismiss
 Of the world's difficulties.
 Nor must thou be for them
 At all in despair :
 Nor do thou ever let
 Prosperity weaken thee ;
 Least thou shouldst become,
 With arrogance from that,
 Again confounded ;

If thou also wilt, with a
 clear light, behold the truth,
 in the right path direct your
 steps : drive away joys ; drive
 away fear : chase hope. Ibid.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*CHAP.
IV.

And be too elevated
By the enjoyments
Of this world's riches.

Nor, again, too weakly
Despair of any good
When in the world,
Adversity of most things
Oppresses thee;
And thou thyself
Most strongly pressest for-
wards.

Because always is
The mind's thought
Much bound with sorrow
If these evils can disturb it
With which it struggles within.
Because both these two
Draw together, over the mind
The mists of error;
So that on it the eternal sun
May not hence shine upon it
On account of the black mists
Before that it has become
strengthened. P. 155.

Nor let grief be present.
The mind is in a cloud, and
bound with chains where
these reign. Lib. i. met. 7.

ON THE NATURAL EQUALITY OF MANKIND.

The citizens of earth,
Inhabitants of the ground,
All had
One like beginning.
They of two only
All came;
Men and women,
Within the world.
And they also now yet
All alike
Come into the world
The splendid and the lowly.

All the human race arises
on the earth from a like
origin. There is one father
of events: one, administers
all things.

BOOK
V.*Alfred.**Boetius.*

This is no wonder,
Because all know
That there is one God
Of all creatures ;
Lord of mankind :
The Father and the Creator.

He the sun's light
Giveth from the heavens ;
The moon, and this
Of the greater stars.

He made
Men on the earth ;
And united
The soul to the body.
At the first beginning
The folk under the skies
He made equally noble ;
Every sort of men.

Why then do ye ever
Over other men
Thus arrogate
Without cause ?
Now you do not find
Any not noble.
Why do ye from nobility
Now exalt yourselves ?
In his mind let
Every one of men
Be rightly noble,
As I have mentioned to thee,
The inhabitants of the earth
Nor only in the flesh ;
But yet every man
That is by all
His vices subdued
First abandons
His origin of life,
And his own

He gave to Phœbus his
rays, and to the moon her
horns.

He gave men to the earth,
and the stars to the sky. He
inclosed in limbs the minds
sought from the lofty seat.
Therefore he made all mortals
a noble race.

Why do you clamour on
your birth and ancestors ?
If you consider your begin-
ning and your author, God,
no one exists that is not
noble. Lib. iii. met. 6.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*CHAP.
IV.

Nobility from himself;
 And also which the Father
 At the beginning made for him.
 For this, will
 The Almighty God
 Unnoble him;
 That he noble no more
 Thenceforth might be,
 In the world;
 Nor come to glory. P. 171.

ON TYRANTS.

Hear now one discourse
 Of those proud,
 Unrighteous
 Kings of the earth,
 That now here with many
 And various garments,
 Bright in beauty,
 Wonderously shine
 On high seats;
 Clothed in gold
 And jewels.
 Without these stand around
 Innumerable
 Thegns and earls
 That are adorned
 With warlike decorations;
 Illustrious in battle;
 With swords and belts
 Very glittering;
 And who attend him
 With great glory.
 They threaten every where
 The surrounding
 Other nations;
 And the lord careth not,
 That governs this army,
 For either friends' or enemies'
 Life or possessions;

The kings whom you see
 sitting on the lofty elevation
 of the throne, splendid with
 their shining purple; hedged
 with dismal weapons; threat-
 ening with grim countenance;
 breathless with the rage of
 the heart.

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V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

But he, a fierce mind,
 Rests on every one,
 Likest of any thing
 To a fierce hound.
 He is exalted
 Within in his mind
 For that power
 That to him every one
 Of his dear princes
 Gives and supports.

If men then would
 Wind off from him
 These kingly ornaments,
 Each of his garments,
 And him then divest
 Of that retinue
 And that power
 That he before had,
 Then thou shouldest see
 That he would be very like
 Some of those men
 That most diligently
 Now, with their services,
 Press round about him.
 If he be not worse
 I think he will be no better.
 If to him then ever,
 Unexpectedly, chance should
 happen
 That he should be deprived
 Of that glory, and garments,
 And retinue, and that power
 That we have spoken about ;
 If from him any of these things
 Were taken away,
 I know that he would think
 Then he was crawling in a
 prison,
 Or indeed bound with ropes.

If from these proud ones
 any one should draw aside
 the covering of their gaudy
 apparel, he will see that the
 lords are bound with chains
 within.

Alfred.

I can assert
 That from this excess of every
 thing
 Of food and clothes, wine,
 drinks,
 And sweetmeats,
 Most strongly would increase
 Of that luxuriousness
 The great furious course.
 Much disturbed would be
 His intellectual mind.
 To every man
 Thence must come
 Extraordinary evils,
 And useless quarrels;
 Then they become angry.
 To them it happens in their
 hearts
 That within are afflicted,
 Their thoughts in their minds
 With this strong fire
 Of hot-heartedness,
 And afterwards fierce sorrow
 Also bindeth them
 Hard imprisoned.
 Then afterwards beginneth
 Hope to some
 Greatly to lie
 About that revenge of battle
 Which the anger desireth
 Of one and of the other,
 It promises them all
 Which their contempt
 Of right may enjoin.

Boetius.

For here greedy lust pours
 venom on their hearts : here
 turbid anger, raising its waves,
 lashes the mind ; or sorrow
 wearies her captives ; or de-
 ceitful hope torments them.

 C H A P.
 IV.

I told thee before
 In this same book,
 That of the various creatures
 Each single one
 Some good

Since, then, you see that
 one head has so many ty-
 rants, pressed by their ini-
 quitous sway, it performs not
 what it wishes. Lib. iv. met. 2.

BOOK

V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

Always desired
 From his own
 Ancient nature ;
 But the unrighteous
 Kings of the earth
 Cannot ever
 Accomplish any good
 From the evil
 That I have mentioned.
 It is no wonder,
 Because they love the vices
 Which I named before,
 And to which only
 They are always subject. P. 186.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

What will the rich man be,
 The worldly, covetous one,
 In his mind the better,
 Though he should much pos-
 sess

Of gold and gems
 And of every good :
 Possessions innumerable ;
 And for him men
 Should plough every day
 A thousand acres ?

Though this world
 And this race of men
 Should be under the sun
 South, west, and east,
 To his power
 All subjected,
 He could not
 Of these acquisitions
 Hence lead away
 From this world
 Any thing more
 Of his treasured property
 Than he hither brought. P. 169.

Though the rich miser
 should be in a flowing whirl-
 pool of gold he could not
 satisfy his appetite for wealth.
 Let him adorn his neck with
 the berries of the Red Sea,
 and cleave his rich soils with
 a hundred oxen.

Biting cares will not quit
 him while he lives, nor can his
 trivial riches accompany him
 when dead. Lib. iii. met. 3.

ON SELF-GOVERNMENT.

CHAP.
IV.

Alfred.
Boetius.

He that would
Possess power
Then let him first toil
That he of his self
In his mind have
Power within ;
Unless he ever
Would be to his vices
Entirely subjected :
Let him expel from his mind
Many of those
Various anxieties
That to him are useless :
Let him dismiss some
Of his complaints and miseries.

He that would be power-
ful let him tame his fierce
mind, nor submit to foul reins
his neck bowed down by lust.

Though to him should
All this world,
So as the great streams
Surround it without,
Be given to his possession,
Even so wide
As now westmost is,
Where an island lieth
Out on the ocean ;
In which is no
Night in summer,
Nor more in winter
Of any day
Distinguished by time ;
Which is called Tile.
Though now any alone
Governed all
To this island ;
And also thence
To India eastward ;
Though he now all that
Might possess,
Why should his power be

For though the remote
Indian earth should tremble
at thy command, and farthest
Thule serve thee, yet it is not
in their power to expel gloomy
care, nor to drive away your
miserable complaints. Lib. iii.
met. 5.

BOOK

V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

Ought the greater
If he afterwards hath not
Power over himself
In his thoughts,
And does not earnestly
Guard himself well
In words and deeds
Against the vices
That we before have men-
tioned? P. 170.

THE EXCURSIVENESS OF THE MIND.

I have wings
Swifter than the birds :
With them I can fly
Far from the earth,
Over the high roof
Of this heaven.
And there I now must
Wing thy mind,
With my feathers,
To look forth
Till that thou mayest
This world
And every earthly thing
Entirely overlook :
Thou mayest over the skies
Extensively
Sport with thy wings,
Far up over
The heavens to wind
Afterwards to view
Above over all.
Thou mayest also go
Above the fire
That many years ascends far
Betwixt the air and the fir-
mament
So as to it at the beginning
The Father appointed.

I have rapid wings that
can ascend the heights of the
pole, which the swift mind
puts on when she looks down
on the hated earth : sur-
mounts the globe of the im-
mense air, and sees the clouds
behinds her.

Alfred.

That thou mayest afterwards
 With the sun
 Go betwixt
 The other stars.
 Thou mightest full soon
 In the firmament
 Above afterwards advance;
 And then continuously
 To the coldest
 Only star
 That outmost is
 Of all the stars.
 This Saturnus
 The inhabitants of the sea
 call
 Under the heavens.
 He is the cold
 All icy planet.
 He wanders outmost
 Over all,
 Above the other stars.
 Afterwards thou then
 From this may upheave thy-
 self
 To go forth;
 Thou mayest proceed farther:
 Then wouldest thou after-
 wards soon
 Ascend above the firmament
 In its swift course.
 If thou goest on right
 Thou wouldest then the highest
 Heaven leave behind.
 Then mightest thou afterwards
 Of the true light
 Have thy portion.
 Whence the Only King
 Widely governs,
 Above the firmament.

Boetius.

Warmed by the motion of
 the agile æther, it transcends
 the vortex of fire, till it rises
 to the star-bearing domes,
 and touches on the paths of
 Phœbus.

Or it may accompany the
 journey of the chill old man,
 as a soldier of the radiant
 star; or shining wherever
 night is painted, it may re-
 trace the circle of the star;
 and when sufficiently satiated,
 it may leave the extremity of
 the pole; and, partaker of
 the revered light, press to-
 wards the summit of the swift
 æther.

CHAP.
IV.

BOOK

V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

And below;
And in like manner rules
All the creatures
Of the world.

This is the Wise King,
This is he that governs
Over the nations of men,
And all the other
Kings of the earth.
He with his bridle
Hath restrained around
All the revolutions
Of earth and heaven.
He his governing reins
Well coerces.
He governs ever
Through his strong might
All the swift cars
Of heaven and earth.
He the only judge is steadfast,
Unchangeable,
Beauteous, and great.

Here the Lord of Kings
holds the sceptre and governs
the reins of the world, and,
stable himself, rules the swift
car, the splendid arbiter of
things.

If thou turnest right in thy
way
Up to that country,
Thou wilt find it
A noble place:
Though thou now yet
Hast not obtained it.
If thou ever again
There canst come,
Then wilt thou say,
And soon declare:—

If that road should meet
thee returning, which now
forgetful you inquire for, you
may say:—

“ This is entirely
My own kindred,
Earth, and country.
Formerly from hence

“ I remember that this is
my country: this is my birth-
place: here I will rest.”

*Alfred.**Boetius.*CHAP.
IV.

I came, and was born
Through the might of this ar-
tificer.

I will never
Depart hence from it,
But I always here
Will softly
With my wings desire
Firmly to stand."

If to thee then
It should ever again happen,
That thou wilt or must
The world's darkness
Again try;
Thou mightest easily look on
The unrighteous kings of the
earth,
And the other arrogant rich,
That this weary folk
Worst torment.
And see that always
They be very wretched;
Unmighty
In every thing;
Even the same
That they, wretched folk,
Some while now
Most strongly dreaded. — p. 184.

If you should like to re-
visit the earthly night you
have left, you would see what
fierce banished tyrants the
miserable people fear, lib. iv.
met. 1.

HIS PICTURE OF FUTURITY.

O children of men,
Over the world!
Every one of the free!
Try for that eternal good
That we have spoken of,
And for those riches
That we have mentioned.
He that then now is

Hither come all ye cap-
tives, whom deceitful de-
sire, blunting your earthly
minds, binds in its vicious
chains!

BOOK

V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

Narrowly bound
 With the useless love
 Of this large world,
 Let him seek speedily
 Full freedom,
 That he may advance
 To the riches
 Of the soul's wisdom.

Because this is
 The only rest of all-labours;
 A desirable port
 To high ships;
 Of our mind
 The great and mild habitation.
 This is the only port
 That will last for ever;
 After the waves
 Of our troubles,
 Of every storm,
 Always mild.
 This is the place of peace,
 And the only comforter
 Of all distresses,
 After this world's troubles.

This is the pleasant station
 After these miseries
 To possess.
 And I earnestly know
 That the gilded vessel,
 The silvery treasure,
 The stone fortress of gems,
 Or riches of the world
 To the mind's eye
 Can never bring any light.
 Nothing can recompense
 Its acuteness,
 But the contemplation
 Of the truer riches

Here will be the rest to
 your labours. Here, the se-
 rene port; a tranquil abode.
 Here, the only asylum open
 to the wretched.

Not all that Tagus may
 give in its golden sands, or
 Hermus from its glittering
 bank, or Indus near the warm
 circle, mingling green gems
 with white, can enlighten the
 sight; but they make the
 mind more blind from their
 darkening effects.

Alfred.

But such things strongly
 The mind's eye
 Of every one of men
 Blind in their breast,
 When they to it
 Are made brighter.
 But all things
 That in this present
 Life so please,
 Are slender,
 Earthly things,
 And to be fled from.

But wonderful is that
 Beauty and brightness,
 Which every creature
 With beauty illuminates,
 And after that
 Governs all :
 This Governor will not
 That we should destroy
 Our souls,
 But he himself will them
 Enlighten with light ;
 The Ruler of life.

If then any man
 With the clear eyes
 Of his mind,
 May ever behold
 Of heaven's light
 The lucid brightness,
 Then he will say,
 That the brightness of the sun
 Will be darkness,
 If any man
 Should compare it
 With the superior light
 Of God Almighty.

Boetius.

Whatever of these pleases
 and excites the mind, earth
 nourishes in its lowest ca-
 verns.

The radiance by which
 Heaven is governed and flou-
 rishes, shuns the obscured
 ruins of the soul.

Whoever can remark this
 light will deny the beams of
 Phœbus their lustre, lib. iii.
 met. 10.

CHAP.
 IV.

BOOK

V.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*

That will be to every spirit
Eternal without end;
To happy souls.—p. 181, 182.

HIS ADDRESS TO THE DEITY.

O thou Creator!
Of the shining stars;
Of heaven and the earth:
Thou on high throne
Eternal governest.
And thou swiftly all
The heaven turnest round,
And through thy
Holy might
Compellest the stars
That they should obey thee.
Thus the sun
Of the black night
The darkness extinguishes
Through thy might.

With pale light
The bright planets
The moon tempers
Through the effect of thy
power.
A while also the sun
Bereaveth that of its
Bright light.
When it may happen
That near enough
It necessarily comes.

So the greater
Morning star
That we with another name
The even star
Hear named:
Thou compellest this
That he the sun's

Oh Framers of the starry
world! who, resting on thy
perpetual throne, turnest the
heaven with a rapid whirl,
and compellest the stars to
endure a law: l. i. m. 5.

As now the moon, with her
full horn of light imbibing all
her brother's flames, hideth
the lesser stars: now pale
with obscure horn, nearer to
Phœbus loses her lustre.

As Hesperus in the first
hours of night emerges with
chilling beams; and again as
the morning star, when Phœ-
bus rises, changes his accus-
tomed rule.

*Alfred.**Boetius.*CHAP.
IV.

Path should precede,
Every year
He shall go on
Before him to advance.

Thou, O Father,
Makest of summer
The long days
Very hot.
To the winter days,
Wonderously short
Times hast thou appointed.

Thou, to the trees
Givest the south and west,
Which before, black storms
From the north and east
Had deprived
Of every leaf
By the more hostile wind.

Oh! how on earth
All creatures
Obey thy command,
As in the heavens
Some do
In mind and power.
But men only
Against thy will
Oftenest struggle.
Hail! Oh thou Eternal,
And thou Almighty,
Of all creatures
Creator and ruler.
Pardon thy wretched
Children of the earth,
Mankind,
In the course of thy might.

Thou, with the cold of the
leaf-flowing frost, confinest
the light to a shorter stay:
thou, when the fervid summer
shall come, dividest the active
hours of the night.

Thy power tempers the
various year, so that the leaves
which the breath of Boreas
takes away, the mild zephyr
re-clothes; and the seeds
which Arcturus beheld, Si-
rius burns in their tall harvest.

Nothing, forsaking its an-
cient law, quits the work of
its own station. Governing
all things with a certain end,
Thou, deservedly our ruler!
disdainest to restrain the ac-
tions of men only.

BOOK

V.

Alfred.

Why? O eternal God!
 Wouldest thou ever
 That fortune
 At her will
 Should go
 To evil men?
 That in every way so strongly
 She full oft
 Should hurt the guiltless.

Evil men sit
 Over the earth's kingdoms
 On high seats.
 They tread down the holy
 Under their feet
 Who know no crimes.

Why should fortune
 Move so perversely?
 Thus are hidden
 Here on the world
 Over many cities
 The bright arts.
 The unrighteous always
 Have in contempt
 Those that are, than them
 Wiser in right;
 Worthier of power.
 The false lot is
 A long while
 Covered by frauds.

Now, in the world here,
 Impious oaths
 Hurt not man.
 If thou now, O Ruler,
 Wilt not steer fortune,
 But at her self-will
 Lettest her triumph,
 Then I know

Boetius.

Why should slippery fortune
 take so many turns?
 Noxious pain due to crime
 presses the innocent.

But perverse manners sit
 on the lofty throne, and the
 guilty tread on the righteous
 necks by an unjust change.

Virtue hidden in obscurity
 lives unseen, bright in its
 darkness. The just endure
 the crime of the wicked.

These, no perjury, no fraud,
 dressed with falsehood, hurt;
 but when they choose to use
 their strength, they rejoice
 to subdue the greatest kings,
 whom innumerable people
 fear.

Alfred.

Boetius.

CHAP.
IV.

That thee will
Worldly men doubt
Over the parts of the globe,
Except a few only.

Oh, my Lord!
Thou that overseest all
Of the world's creatures,
Look now on mankind
With mild eyes.
Now they here in many
Of the world's waves
Struggle and labour,
Miserable earth citizens!
Forgive them now.—P.153.

O now behold thy wretched
earth, who connectest the
union of all things. We
mankind, not a vile part of
so great a work, are shaken
by the sea of fortune. O
Ruler, repress the rapid
waves, and with the law that
rules the immense heaven,
keep steady thy solid earth.

THE preceding facts of Alfred's studies, translations, additions, and compositions, enable us to perceive the great improvements which they diffused upon the intellect of the Anglo-Saxon nation. By his Orosius and Bede, he made the general history and geography of the world, and the particular history of England, a part of the mind of his countrymen; and, by his Bede, he made historical fame an object of ambition to his royal successors; for that exhibited to their own eye-sight how their predecessors had been recorded and applauded. By transmitting to posterity the detail of Ohthere and Wulfstan's Voyages, he made such expeditions interesting to the nation, fixed them in their memory, and ensured their future imitation. By his Boetius he poured a great number of moral thoughts and feelings among his rude

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V.

Anglo-Saxons, which they had never considered or experienced before; and by cultivating poetical versification he increased the popularity and improvement of that pleasing art. He found the English mind unformed and barren, and he led it to knowledge, civility, moral sentiment, and moral reasoning. His attachment to religion increased its influence among his descendants and in his country.

BUT there is another point of view in which the intellectual benefit that Alfred conferred upon his country has not yet been considered. This is the easy, fluent, and lively prose style, which it may be seen from the extracts already given, that he so peculiarly contributed to form by his translations and additions to Boetius. The work is not a mere literal version of the Latin diction, into a servile corresponding one, as the Anglo-Saxon Psalter, published by Spelman, in which every Latin word is rendered, however harshly, by a similar English one. Alfred's Boetius, even where he translates exactly, is done with the freedom of a master, who uses his own style without departing from his author's meaning. The best prose style of all countries is that which men of superior intellect use, who, to much literary cultivation, add much intercourse with public affairs, and with the highest classes of the society in which they live. The activity of their daily life gives a spirit and freedom to their minds and thoughts,

which pervade their colloquial diction; and this, when polished by the most cultivated urbanity of the day, and enlarged by the more extensive subjects of their studies, and the greater correctness of meditative composition, becomes superior to any that the world or the closet can singly create. Alfred's Boetius in every part displays these excellencies. Its form of dialogue favoured their union. It is clear, easy, animated, attractive, and impressive. It comes the nearest to our present best English prose style of all the Anglo-Saxon prose writings that have survived to us, and entitles Alfred to be considered as the venerable father of our best English diction, as well as our first moral essayist.

WE may close our review of his intellectual character with remarking, as an additional subject for our admiration, that not above two centuries and an half elapsed, between the first appearance of literature among the Anglo-Saxons, and the formation of Alfred's mind. Has any country, within so short a period, produced in itself an intellect amongst its sovereigns, that combined so many excellencies?

CHAP. V.

ALFRED's *Moral Character.*BOOK
V.
}

WE have contemplated Alfred as the student, and the man of literature, and in his public character. Let us proceed to review his conduct in more interesting relations.

To educate our children in the best improvements and noblest virtues of our times, is to perform a duty the most sacred which we owe to society, and its parent. If, as reason hopes, and revelation assures us, He, who called man into being, is interested in his concerns, no event can more propitiate his favour, than the gradual improvement of his creation. If one idea can predominate over others in the divine economy of human affairs, it is reasonable to believe, that it must be the plan of our moral and intellectual progression. Whoever leaves his offspring more informed, and more virtuous than himself, accelerates this favourite scheme of supreme goodness, and claims the gratitude of society whom he benefits.

ALFRED was a great example to posterity in this path of duty. He was as solicitous to improve his family as himself. He had several

children; some died in their infancy.¹ Æthelfleda, Edward, Ethelgiva, Alfritha, and Æthelweard, survived him. Edward and Alfritha were educated in the royal court with great attention. They were accustomed to filial duty towards their parent, and to behave with mildness and affability towards others, whether strangers or natives. Asser remarks, that they retained these estimable qualities at the period in which he wrote. They were induced to improve their minds with all the liberal learning which could then be obtained. Besides the hymns of devotion, they were studiously taught Saxon books, and particularly Saxon poetry; and they were accustomed to frequent ² reading.

ÆTHELWEARD, his youngest son, received a sort of public education; he was committed to the diligent care of proper teachers, with almost all the noble children of the province, and with many of inferior ranks. There they were all assiduously instructed in Latin and Saxon: they learned also the art of writing, to which

¹ Asser, mentioning his living children, adds, "Exceptis his qui in infantia morte præveniente præoccupati sunt," p. 42. Rudborne mentions that Edmund was his first-börn, whom his father had crowned as his intended successor. He died a little before his father, and was buried in the old monastery at Winchester, "as appears," says Rudborne, "by his marble on his tomb, on the north side of the altar, which is inscribed, Hic jacet Edmundus Rex filiis Aldredi regis." Hist. Mag. Wint. p. 207.

² Asser, 43.

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 V. literature owes its existence. By these institutions, the season of their youth was employed to inform and enlarge their minds. When their matured age gave the requisite strength, they were exercised in hunting, and those robust arts, which, by the habits of society at that time, were made honourable and popular.³

THE most exquisite luxury which aged parents can enjoy, when the charms of life and all the pleasures of sense are fast fading around them, is to see their parental care rewarded by a dutiful, affectionate, and intelligent offspring. Alfred enjoyed this happiness, which he had so well merited. Æthelfleda, his eldest, became a woman of very superior mind: such were its energies, that they even reached a masculine strength. She is extolled, in the ancient chronicles, as the wisest lady in England. Her brother Edward governed his life in its best actions by her counsels. After she was married to Ethered, the governor of Mercia, she built several cities, and upon all occasions displayed a statesman's skill, and an Amazonian activity.⁴

³ Asser, 43. Æthelweard lived twenty-one years after his father, and died 922, in the beginning of the reign of Athelstan. Matt. West. 359.

⁴ The difficulty and sufferings of her first parturition, deterred her from the chance of a repetition. She protested, that it did not become a king's daughter to pursue any pleasure which was attended with such inconvenience. Malmsb. 46. He describes her, "Favor civium, pavor

THE reign of Edward was distinguished by its vigour and prosperity. Some of the last instructions of Alfred to his son have been popularly preserved⁵, and they deserve to be quoted, for their pathetic simplicity, their political wisdom, and the proof which they afford of this monarch's anxiety for the welfare of his subjects. CHAP.
V.

“THOU,” quoth Alfred, “my dear son, set thee now beside me, and I will deliver thee true instructions. My son, I feel that my hour is coming. My countenance is wan. My days are almost done. We must now part. I shall to another world, and thou shalt be left alone

hostium, immodici cordis fæmina. — Virago potentissima multum fratrem juvare consiliis, in urbibus extruendis non minus valere, non discernas potiore fortuna, an virtute; ut mulier viros domesticos protegeret, alienos terreret.” Ib. 46. The Chronicle MS. Nero. A. 6. says of her, “Per cujus animum frater suus Edwardus multo melius in regno actus suos dirigebat,” p. 6.

⁵ This is the conclusion of the Cotton MSS. mentioned before, p. 242. Of this work Spelman says, fairly, “I cannot think it fit to offer them into the world as an instance of what the king composed; for they are not his very work in the Saxon tongue, but a miscellany collection of some later author, who, according to his own faculty, hath, in a broken English, put together such of the sayings of king Alfred, as he met withal,” p. 125. Wanley says, the fragment is in Norman Saxon, “circa tempus Henrici II. aut Richardi I. conscriptum in quo continentur quædam ex proverbiiis et apothegmatis Ælfredi regis sapientissimi,” p. 231. A copy of the Galba MS. of this work is stated to exist in MS. at Oxford, in the Bodleian Library.

BOOK in all my wealth. I pray thee (for thou art my
{**V.** dear child) strive to be a father, and a lord to
thy people. Be thou the children's father, and
the widow's friend. Comfort thou the poor,
and shelter the weak; and, with all thy might,
right that which is wrong. And, son, govern
thyself, by law; then shall the Lord love thee,
and God above all things shall be thy reward.
Call thou upon him to advise thee in all thy
need, and so shall he help thee, the better to
compass that which thou wouldst." ⁶

ÆTHELWEARD became a man celebrated for
his learning. ⁷

⁶ Spelman, p. 131. This collection begins thus:—

“ At Siþþonð jeren Thainer manie,
Fele Bircoper and fele boc lepeð,
Eplej ppuðe 7 Knihter egloche.
Ther þær Eple Alþuch of the laze ppuþ pife.
And ec Alþeð 7 Engle hipeð, Engle ðapling.
On Englonð he þær king. Þem he ȝan lepen

Spō him hepen mihten, hu hi hepe lif leben ȝcolben.

Alfred he was on Englelond a king well swithe strong.

He was king and clerk. Well he luvied God's werk:

He was wise on his word, and war on his speeche.

He was the wiseste man that was on Engeland.”

Ibid. p. 127.

The 5th article is worth quoting in Spelman's translation.
“ Thus,” quoth Alfred, “ without wisdom, wealth is worth
little. Though a man had an hundred and seventy acres
sown with gold, and all grew like corn, yet were all that
wealth worth nothing unless that of an enemy one could
make it become his friend. For what differs gold from a
stone, but by discreet using of it? p. 130.

⁷ To this son, Alfred, by his will, devised land in seven-
teen places, beside that of the Weal district, and 500 pounds.

ALFRITHA obtained an honourable ⁸ marriage. CHAP.
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We have mentioned, in a preceding ⁹ chapter, Baldwin, with the iron arm, count of Flanders, who carried off, with friendly violence, Judith, the widow of Ethelwulf, and of Alfred's brother Ethelbald. The son of this marriage, which the king of France at last sanctioned, was Baldwin the Bald. It was he who obtained the hand of Alfritha; their offspring was ¹⁰ Arnulf, who is mentioned with expressions of celebrity, and who succeeded his father in 918.¹¹ From a descendant of Arnulf was born Mathilda, the wife of William the Conqueror.

It is the invariable dictate of benevolence, never to be inattentive to the comforts of others. Alfred displayed this accomplished temper in his arrangement of his household. He divided all his noble attendants into three bodies, and he regulated their personal services with a kind regard to their convenience, as well as to his

His arrangement of his officers.

⁸ Alfred bequeathed to her 100 pounds, and three manors.

⁹ P. 2.

¹⁰ Her relation Ethelwerd, thus speaks of this marriage: "Alfred misit Alfhrythe filiam suam ad partes Germaniæ Baldwino in matrimonium qui genuit ab ea filios duos, Athulfum et Earnulfum; duas filias quoque, Ealshwid et Earmen-truth." Prologus Ethelw. p. 831. The Chronicon Sithense in Bouquet's Recueil, tom. ix. p. 74., places the marriage in 898. The Chronicon Alberici mistakes both the name and parentage of the lady, for it calls her Ethelwinda, and makes her Alfred's grand-daughter, filiam filiæ suæ. Bouq. tom. ix. p. 61.

¹¹ Bouquet's Recueil, tom. ix. p. 152.

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own. He exacted the attendance of one of the divisions for a month, and afterwards allowed the persons who composed it to return home to their families and affairs, while another supplied their place for the same period.¹² By this regular routine, Alfred was carefully served, and an ample time was afforded to his attendants to watch over their private concerns. He was also scrupulously exact in the distribution and application of his yearly revenue. He ordered his officers to divide it into two general portions. These portions he again subdivided, and appropriated each division to a peculiar and inalienable service.

ONE of his allotments, a sixth of his income, he set apart for his warriors and noble attendants; he gave to each according to his dignity and to his services. Another sixth he devoted to the workmen in architecture, whom he collected from several nations. Another sixth he appropriated to foreigners who came to him, whatever might be their country, whether remote or near, whether they claimed his bounty, or awaited its voluntary descent; they received each a portion according to their worthiness, which was given with admirable discretion.¹³

THE other half of his revenue was consecrated to religious objects. This he also separated again, and commanded his officers to put it into four shares. One of these, being one-eighth of

¹² Asser, 65.

¹³ Asser, 65, 66. Florence.

his whole income, was prudently administered to the poor of every nation who came to him. In distributing this, he remembered the axiom of pope Gregory : " Give not little to him who needs much, nor much to him who needs little ; refuse not to the man who should have something, and give not to him who deserves nothing." Another eighth was paid to the two monasteries he built, for their maintenance. Another eighth was for the school which he had diligently made up from many nobles of his nation. Another eighth was dispersed among the neighbouring monasteries of West Saxony and Mercia. In some years he made donations to the churches and clergy in Wales, Cornwall, France, Bretagne, Northumbria, and Ireland, according to his ability.¹⁴

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ALFRED was an exact economist of his time, without which indeed nothing great can be achieved. He had not those heralds of its lapse which we can make so minute and exact ; but he was sensible, that to do all he projected, he must divide his day, and appropriate every part.

THE darkness of the night afforded him no natural means of measuring the progress of the revolving globe ; and as clouds and rain often concealed the sun, which is the only chronometer of uncultivated man, he was compelled to frame some method of marking his day into

¹⁴ Asser, 67.

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regular intervals.¹⁵ Mechanics were then so little known, either in theory or practice, that Alfred had not the aid of this science, from which most of our comforts, both domestic and political, have arisen. He used a simple expedient: his chaplains, by his orders, procured wax, and he ordered seventy-two denarii of it to be made into six equal candles, each candle to be twelve inches long, which were separately marked. These candles, successively used, lasted through the whole twenty-four hours, and of course every inch marked the lapse of twenty minutes; but sometimes the wind rushing in through the windows and doors, the numerous chinks of the walls¹⁶, or the slender covering of the tents, consumed the candles with undue celerity. To cure this evil, which confused his calculation, he thought skilfully and wisely, says Asser¹⁷; and the result of this skill and wisdom was the invention of lanthorns.

¹⁵ The king of the Franks had an advantage in this respect above Alfred; for, in 807, Charlemagne was presented by the king of Persia with a superb clock. "*Horologium ex orichalco, arte mechanica mirifice compositum, in quo duodecim horarum cursus ad clepsydrum vertebatur, cum totidem æreis pilulis, quæ ad completionem horarum decidebant et casu suo subjectum sibi cymbalum tinnire faciebant; additis in eodem ejusdem numeri equitibus qui per 12 fenestras completis horis exibant et impulsu egressionis suæ totidem fenestras quæ prius erant apertæ, claudebant.*" *Annales Car. Mag. Astron. p. 35. Reuberi.*

¹⁶ This is curious language of a royal palace.

¹⁷ *Consilio que artificiose atque sapienter invento, p. 68.*

He found that the white horn became pellucid like glass¹⁸, and with this and wood, a case for his candle was (mirabiliter) admirably made. By these schemes, which our clocks and watches make us deride, he obtained what he wanted, an exact admeasurement of the lapse of time. We have not a correct detail of its appropriation. Asser's general statement, that he consecrated half his time to God¹⁸, gives no distinct idea, because we find, that his liberal mind, in the distribution of his revenue, thought that to apportion money for a school, was devoting it to the Supreme. Malmsbury's account is, that one-third of the natural day and night was given to sleep and refreshment; one-third to the affairs of his kingdom; and one-third to those duties which he considered as sacred.¹⁹ This indistinct statement cannot now be amplified.

He had been fond of hunting and sporting; but as he became older, we may infer, from his paraphrase of Boetius's conditional assertion, that if a man rode for his health he did not desire the motion but its effect, that our afflicted king did not take this exercise for pleasure. He says:—

“No man rides out because it pleases him to ride; but he rides because by the excursion he earns something. Some earn by it that they shall be healthier; some that they shall be more active; and some because they would come to some other place which they desire to be at.”²⁰

¹⁸ Asser, 67.¹⁹ Malmsbury, 45.²⁰ Alf. Boet. p. 20.

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His piety.

ONE of the principal features of Alfred's useful life, was his earnest piety. From the gross and illiberal superstitions which have been connected with religion, and from the frauds and hypocrisy which have been sometimes practised under her venerable name, piety, although one of the native flowers of the uncorrupted heart, has lost much of its influence upon mankind. Philosophy has justly taught us to discredit priestcraft; and the dread of the evils which this has produced, has greatly alienated many from religion itself. Whenever a mischief tends to accompany a blessing, the good is undervalued till the evil can be removed.

BUT although this state of opinion results, not unnaturally, from some part of the former experience of mankind, it is not a decision which wisdom and knowledge will ultimately sanction. Religion is as necessary to the happiness and improvement of man, and to the healthful continuance and expected melioration of society, as superstition, artifice, tyranny, and ignorance are injurious and debasing; and of all religions, none can be compared with Christianity, either in intellect, morals, or beneficence. It has raised the kingdoms where it has prevailed, to a proud superiority over the rest of the world; and it has given a beauty, a richness, and an utility to the human character, which we shall in vain look for under any other system. No religion is either in spirit or in precept more adverse to

those systems of delusion and selfishness to which it has been perverted, and from which it is ever appealing; none can better claim the support of the wise, and the sympathy of the good. C H A P.
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RELIGION was one of the earliest offsprings of the human intellect, and cannot long be separated from it without certain deterioration to both. As it is the best guide and guardian of mind as well as of virtue, if it be allied with our reason, and enriched with our knowledge, many of the greatest characters of their day, have in all ages upheld it. But there are some dispositions to whom it is peculiarly congenial and gratifying; and Alfred was one of that order of intelligence which has delighted in its exercise.

By other men, piety may have been taken up as a mask, or worn as a habit; by Alfred it was applied to its great and proper use, to the correction of immorality, to the advancement of virtue, to the encouragement of knowledge, and to become the asylum of happiness.

ALFRED, like other men, inherited the passions and frailties of mortality: he felt immoral tendencies prevalent in his constitution, and he found that he could not restrain his objectionable desires. With this experience mankind in general rest satisfied: they feel themselves prompted to vicious gratifications: they take the tendencies of nature as their excuse, and they freely indulge.

BUT the mind of Alfred emancipated itself

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from such sophistry: he disdained to palter with his moral sense: he knew that his propensities were immoral; and though a prince, he determined not to be their slave. He found the power of his reason to be inadequate to subdue them; and he therefore had recourse to the aids of religion. His honoured friend assures us, that to protect himself from vice, he rose alone at the first dawn of day, and privately visited churches and their shrines, for the sake of prayer. There, long prostrate, he besought the great moral Legislator to strengthen his good intentions. So sincere was his virtuous determination, that he even implored the dispensation of some affliction which he could support, and which would not, like blindness or leprosy, make him useless and contemptible in society, as an assistant to his virtue. With frequent and earnest devotion, he preferred this request; and when at no long interval the disorder of the ficus came upon him, he welcomed its occurrence, and converted it to a moral utility, though it attacked him severely.²¹ However variously with our present habits, we may appreciate the remedy with which Alfred chose to combat his too ardent passions, we cannot refuse our applause to his magnanimity. His abhorrence of vice, his zeal for practical virtue, would do honour to any private man of the most regular habits:

²¹ Asser, 41, 42.

but in a prince who lives in that sphere of society C H A P.
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 where every object and every associate tempt
 the passions, and seduce the reason, it was one
 of those noble exertions of soul which humanity
 rarely yet displays, and which words cannot
 adequately applaud.

ASSER repeatedly describes his sovereign's religious disposition: "He was accustomed to hear divine service, especially the mass, every day, and to repeat psalms and prayers, and the devotions for the hours of the day and for night; and he often frequented churches alone, without his state, in the night-time, for the sake of praying."²²

ASSER also adds: "It was his habit, attentively and solicitously, to hear the sacred Scriptures read by his own subjects, or by foreigners when any came to him from abroad, and also prayers.

"He lamented continually, with sorrow and sighing, to all who were admitted into his intimacy, that the Deity had made him void of Divine wisdom and the liberal arts. But He who beholds the internal mind, and promotes every virtuous meditation and good inclination, increased this inward impulse, till the king had acquired, from every quarter within his reach, coadjutors of this pious disposition who were able to assist him in the wisdom he desired, and to conduct him to the proficiency he ²³ coveted."

²² Asser, p. 44.

²³ These are Asser's words, p. 45.

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IN another place Asser informs us that Alfred carefully carried in his bosom a little book, in which were written the daily offices of prayer, and some psalms and pious supplications which he had read in his youth.²⁴

ASSER intimates that one of the king's first uses of his knowledge of Latin, and his mode of learning it, was to translate passages of the sacred Scriptures, and to insert them in the book which he called his manual, because he had it always at his hand, and from which he then said he derived no small comfort.²⁵

NEARLY a thousand years have elapsed since Alfred's reign, and yet no plan of acquiring moral and philosophical wisdom has been suggested which will be found to be more efficacious than this invaluable habit of our Anglo-Saxon king. They who have profited from it, can attest its efficacy.

BUT, independently of Asser's account, we have two written records still remaining of the pious feelings of this admirable king, from his own heart and pen, in his Anglo-Saxon selections and translations from St. Austin's meditations, and in his additions to his version of Boetius. As the truth is every day becoming more apparent, and will be ere long admitted by the most philosophical, that enlightened religion is the best guide to wisdom, virtue, and social order,

²⁴ Asser, p. 55.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 57.

and their surest basis, we will make no apology for adding a few extracts on this subject. CHAP.
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ALFRED's imitation of the fourth metrum of Boetius consists chiefly of the additions of his own piety :—

“ He that would firmly build his house he should not set it upon the highest hill; and He that would seek heavenly wisdom must not be arrogant. And again,

“ As he that would firmly build his house will not place it upon sand-hills, so if thou wouldest build wisdom, set it not up on covetousness; for as the drinking sand swalloweth the rain, so covetousness absorbs the frail happiness of this world, because it will be always thirsty.

“ Nor can a house stand long on an high mountain if a full raging wind presses on it. Nor hath it on the drinking sand that which will continue against violent rain.

“ So also the mind of man is undermined and agitated from its place when the wind of strong troubles or the rain of immeasurable anxiety shake it.

“ But he that will have the eternal riches, he will fly from the dangerous beauty of this middle earth, and build the house of his mind on the fast stone of lowliness; for Christ dwelt in the valley of humility and in the meditation of wisdom.

“ Hence the wise man will lead all his life to the joy that is unchangeable, endless, and without care. Then he will despise both earthly good, and evil also; and hope for the future, which will be eternal. Because God, who for ever abides, will preserve him every where in the riches of his mind, though the wind of this world's difficulties, and the perpetual cares of its prosperities should blow on him.”²⁶

FROM the diffuse meditations of St. ²⁷Austin, Alfred selected the parts which most pleased

²⁶ Alfred's Boet. p. 22. The two last paragraphs, and some phrases of the others, are Alfred's own composition.

²⁷ MSS. Brit. Mus. Vitell. A. 15.

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him, and has translated these into Saxon, with that freedom, and with those additions which makes his versions so often breathe his own feelings. As the king's heart is laid open before us in these chosen effusions, it may not be uninteresting to insert some extracts from them, as a further delineation of his real character : —

“ Lord ! Thou who art the maker of all creation, grant me first that I may rightly know thee and rationally address thee ; then may I earn that I shall become worthy that thou, from thy mild-heartedness, shouldest redeem and free me.

“ I call to Thee, Lord ! Thou that abandonest none of thy creatures to become nought. To thee I call ; Thou that lovest all that can love Thee ; both those which know what they should love and those which do not.

“ O Thou ! that didst make all creatures very good without any evil ! Thou ! who wilt not openly show thyself to any others but to those who are cleansed in their mind ! To Thee, O Lord ! I call, because Thou art the father of sincerity and wisdom, and true life, and of the supreme life and the supreme felicity, and of the highest good and the supreme brightness, and of intellectual light.

“ O Thou who art the Father of that Son which has awakened us, and yet urgeth us out of the sleep of our sins, and exhorteth us, that we become thine ; to Thee, Lord ! I pray, who art the supreme truth, for all the truth that is, is truth from Thee.

“ Thee I implore, O Lord ! who art the highest wisdom. Through Thee are wise all those that are so. Thou art the true life, and through Thee all that live subsist. Thou art the supreme felicity, and from Thee all have become happy that are so. Thou art the highest good, and from Thee all beauty springs. Thou art the intellectual light, and from Thee man derives his understanding !

“ He that loveth Thee, seeketh Thee : he that followeth Thee, he will obtain Thee.”

AFTER indulging in these lofty feelings awhile, CHAP.
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he proceeds more earnestly : —

“ Come now to help me, O Thou who art the only Eternal ; the true God of glory : Father and Son, and so art now ; and Holy Spirit, without any separation or mutability, and without any necessity or diminution of power, and who never diest. Thou art always dwelling in the highest brightness, and in highest happiness ; in perfect unanimity, and in the fullest abundance. With Thee there is no deficiency of good, but Thou art ever abiding, replete with every felicity, through endless time.

“ To Thee, O God ! I call and speak. Hear ! O hear me ! Lord ! for Thou art my God and my Lord ; my father and my creator ; my ruler, and my hope ; my wealth and my honour ; my house ; my country ; my salvation, and my life ! Hear, hear me, O Lord ! Few of thy servants comprehend Thee. But Thee alone I love, indeed, above all other things ; Thee I seek ; Thee I will follow ; Thee I am ready to serve. Under Thy power I desire to abide, for Thou alone art the sovereign of all. I pray Thee to command me as Thou wilt.”

ONE extract more, breathing the same warmth of feeling, may be added : —

“ Now I have sought Thee : unlock thy door and teach me how I may come to Thee. I have nothing to bring to Thee but my good will, but I myself have nothing else. I know nothing that is better than to love Thee, the heavenly and the spiritual One, above all earthly things. Thus I also do, Good Father ! because I know of nothing better than thyself.

“ But I know not how I can come to Thee unless Thou permittest me. Teach it to me, and help me. If those through Thee find the truth who find Thee, give me that truth. If they through Thee obtain any virtue who obtain Thee, impart that virtue to me. If wisdom, grant me that wisdom. Add to me the hope of the everlasting life, and pour thy love upon me.

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“ Oh! how Thy goodness is to be admired, for it is unlike all other goods. I wish to come to Thee, and the more earnestly, because of all things I need this path. My desire is to Thee, and this most chiefly because without Thee I cannot come to Thee. If thou abandonest me, then I shall be removed from Thee; but I know that Thou wilt not forsake me unless I forsake Thee. But I will not forsake Thee, because Thou art the highest good. There is none of those who seek Thee rightly that may not find Thee. But they only will seek Thee rightly whom Thou instructest to seek Thee, and teachest how to find Thee.” ²⁸

FROM the preceding extracts, and from those before given from his Boetius, it will appear that Alfred connected his belief in Christianity with high-minded feelings. In his Boetius he takes repeated occasions, and with a peculiar pleasure, to expatiate upon the power, perfections, and providence of the Deity, with all the clearness of perception, and largeness of thought, and warmth of sentiment, of a Platonic or Pythagorean philosopher, though with the superior light of a Christian thinker.

THE subject never occurs to his pen but he dilates upon it with such visible affection, as to show that it was the habitual and predominant feeling of his cultivated mind. Yet, frequently as he has discussed it, he never betrays any narrow-minded superstition. All his conceptions are intelligent and expanded. He views the greatest of beings not only as the sovereign, but as the father, the guide, the instructor, and

²⁸ These extracts are taken from the Cotton MSS. Vitell. A. 15.

the benefactor of his creatures. He loves to
contemplate this awful theme, and to interest
others with his contemplations. It is surprising,
in an age so dark and tumultuous, and amid cares
and employments so harassing and multifarious,
and when relics and rites were the religion
that was most valued, that the mind of Alfred
could have thus enlarged its religious medi-
tations, have conceived them so justly, and ex-
pressed them so rationally, and yet so fervently.
Nothing displays more emphatically the habitual
greatness of his mind than his pure, and lofty,
and affectionate theism, and the natural and
earnest diction into which it effuses.

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THAT Alfred, who lost both his parents before he was ten years old; who was on the throne at the age of twenty-one, and was immersed so long in the occupations and vicissitudes of the most deadly warfares; who lived amid such desolations and ignorance, and had no education but such as in his maturer life he was enabled to give himself, should yet have formed his mind to that admirable combination of great piety with great wisdom, enlarged intellect, liberal feelings, and as much knowledge as his inquisitive curiosity could obtain, is a phenomenon that, in far happier times, has rarely, if ever, been exhibited on the throne. As all effects have adequate causes, we are led to enquire into the origin, or first author, of this attainment. The individual within his reach to whom the commencement of his reli-

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gious feelings can be most justly attributed is his kinsman ²⁹, St. Neot. Alfred is declared to have frequently visited this pious man; to have conversed much with him on devotional subjects; to have profited greatly, both in his moral conduct and knowledge of Christianity ³⁰, from these interviews; and to have been reprov'd by him, as already mentioned, for his faults.

It is not clear whether St. Neot was his brother or his uncle. ³¹ He was a king before he abandoned the world ³², but as to what pro-

²⁹ Asser calls Neot, "Cognatus suus," p. 32. Ingulf says he was frequently at the feet of St. Neot and Werefrith, p. 27.

³⁰ The Saxon life of Neot says, "On ðan tīme pær Ælfrēð kīng and to ðan halgen zelomen (often) com emb hīr rāple theapfe." MS. Vesp. D. 14. p. 145. The oldest Latin life adds, that Neot received him as his lord with honour, and as his brother with love, blessed him, taught and instructed him, and showed him the way of prudence. Claud. A. 5. p. 153. Ramsay's prose life mentions that Neot taught him "multa in divinis et quæ Christianismo pertinebant, regi dederunt." Whit. Neot, p. 347. His metrical life mentions that "ad sanctum *persepe* requirit." Ibid. p. 334.

³¹ The MSS. Claud. A. 5. makes him the son of Ethelwulph, and therefore brother of Alfred. So does the metrical life of Ramsay, Whit. p. 318., and the lives of St. Neot extracted by Leland in his Collect. vol. iv. p. 13., and so Leland himself. De Script. Brit. p. 143. Other authorities state him to be the son of Egbert. I think if he had been Alfred's brother, Asser would have hardly called him "cognatus."

³² So the Claudius MS. intimates: "Neque enim alienus vel ipso genere inferior sanctus erat Neotus: sed *ex eodem sanguine creatus rex*, p. 153. One of the inscriptions on the window in his Cornish church was, "Hic tradidit coronam fratri suo juniore." Whit. Neot, p. 74.

vince he reigned in England, and of his former name, we have no satisfactory ³³information; and where this is wanting no conjecture, however ingenious, can in history be substituted for it.³⁴ But of his spirit and subsequent conduct the details are clear and abundant.

NEOT is described to have been a very meek and mild man: to have become a monk at Glastonbury; to have visited Rome seven times; and to have retired to a wild solitude in Cornwall, which he afterwards quitted to build a monastery.³⁵ He died before 878. The principal feature in his moral character is the resolution which he formed of copying the predominant virtue of every person in his cloister that had any, — the continence of one man, the pleasantness of another, the suavity of a third; the seriousness, humanity, good nature, and love

³³ Ramsay's prose life implies East Anglia, p. 340., and so Leland understood it. *Itin.* iv. p. 135.

³⁴ Dr. Whitaker's theory is, that he was Ethelstan, the son of Ethelwulph, and king of Kent, p. 73. It is a very spirited conjecture, and not wholly improbable; but Malmsbury has declared that he did not know what end Ethelstan had; and the Saxon life says of Neot, "He was in his youth addicted to book-like learning, and to religious practices, and diligently enquired about the eternal life, and how he might most firmly live for God." *MSS. Vesp.* This does not exactly suit with Ethelstan's reign in Kent, and battle in 851 with the Danes. See before, vol. i. p. 505. Fordun, who mentions his death in a conflict with the Scots, does not state his earlier authority for this incident. On the whole, we cannot identify the saint with the king as an historical certainty.

³⁵ See the preceding lives, and Whitaker's account.

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 {
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 } summary of his character is thus transmitted to us: "Humble to all, affable in conversation, mild in transaction of business, venerable in aspect, serene in countenance, moderate even in his walk, sincere, upright, calm, temperate, and charitable." ³⁶

It is not extraordinary that such a man should have led the mind of Alfred to favourable impressions of sincere religion.

It is an agreeable instance of Alfred's good humour, that after his restoration, he was in the habit of narrating to his friends the adventures of his adversity, with lively pleasantry. ³⁷

THERE is one little incident attached to the memory of Alfred, which, as it exists in an author who seems to have been curious in searching into ancient remains ³⁸, may be mentioned here, that nothing concerning so great a man be lost.

ONE day as he was hunting in a wood, he heard the cry of an infant in a tree, and ordered his huntsmen to examine the place. They ascended the branches, and found at top, in an

³⁶ Ramsay's life, p. 341.; Whitaker, p. 93.; and see his further account, p. 94, 95.

³⁷ Malmsbury, 43.

³⁸ This is Johannes Tinmuth, whose MSS. have not yet been published, though they appear to contain some curious particulars. I find an extract from his history in the Bodleian library, lib. xxi. quoted by Dugdale, Monasticon, 1. p. 256.

eagle's nest, a beautiful child, dressed in purple, with golden bracelets, the marks of nobility on his arms. The king had him brought down and baptised, and well educated; from the accident, he named the foundling Nestingum. His grandson's daughter is stated to have been one of the ladies for whom Edgar indulged an improper passion. CHAP. V.

WE will close our account of Alfred's moral character by one remarkable trait. An author who lived at the period of the Norman conquest, in mentioning some of the preceding kings with short appropriate epithets, names Alfred, with the simple but expressive addition of "the truth teller,"³⁹ as if it had been his traditional character.

³⁹ Hermann's *miracula Edmundi* script. circa 1070. MS. Cotton library, Tiberius, b. ii. It follows Abbo's life of this king. It is very beautifully written. P. 21. he says "Elueredi Veridici." In his epithets of the kings, he seems to have closely followed their traditional biography, for he calls Edred, "debilis pedibus," which is a very marking trait.

It is worthy of remark that in Alfred's moral & religious conduct there are no prayers to Saints or even to the Virgin, nor any worship of Images or Relics. Indeed it would appear that the Roman faith had not then taught these practices - altho they were used by the Christian Nations of the Continent.

CHAP. VI.

*ALFRED's Public Conduct.*BOOK
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}

THE conduct of kings affects the whole nation which contemplates it. The fortunes of human nature are in their hands. Virtue and intellect flourish as their conduct is wise and moral; and nations prosper or decline, as the measures of the executive authority are salutary or ignoble.

ALTHOUGH his conduct in the first part of his reign was objectionable, few sovereigns have shaped their conduct with more regard to the public happiness than Alfred, after his restoration. He seems to have considered his life but as a trust to be used for the benefit of his people; and his plans for their welfare were intelligent and great. His military exertions for the benefit of the nation, and their final successes, have been already commemorated. But although performed by him as necessary duties, they were uncongenial with his heart and mind. These turned, as soon as they were at liberty to pursue their natural bias, to nobler objects than war and bloodshed.

His predominant wish was the mental and moral improvement of his countrymen. His

letter to his bishop, prefixed to his translation of Gregory's Pastorals, and already cited¹, breathes this principle throughout. To communicate to others the knowledge which we possess, he even states to be a religious duty. He laments the ignorance which overspread his land; he desires that all the youth, who had pecuniary means, should learn to read English; he gently censures former students who had not put their knowledge into a popular form, by translating it into the vernacular tongue; he devotes his own leisure, and he calls upon his literary clergy to devote theirs, to the translating into English the books they possessed. He led the way with taste and judgment in his historical and philosophical translations: he seems to place his glory in the intellectual advancement of his rude countrymen.

His correspondent, the French archbishop, also bears testimony to the same spirit.² The translation of Gregory's Pastorals could have no other meaning than to rouse the clergy to labour for the moral emendation of his people; and, at the same time that we surrender this book to disapprobation, for its tendency to enchain the mind, it may be proper to remark, that the principle upon which the king recommended it to his clergy was unquestionably just. We can-

¹ From p. 147. of this volume.

² See before, p. 146.

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not look round the world without perceiving how much the morality of a people depends upon the sagacity, the knowledge, and the virtue of its sacred preceptors. Why is the fair influence of true religion lessening among us, but because the appointed guardians of our morals are not always careful to acquire the talents, to display the enlarged views, and to exert the conduct which will interest the thoughtless, impress the dissolute, and satisfy the doubting? In every age the world requires, from its moral teachers, example, persuasion, and conviction. The clergy of Alfred were not distinguished for either, and the king knew no other book which at all aimed at educating them, to influence honourably, as well as to exhort; nor was any other way at that time likely to be more efficacious than to increase the influence of the ecclesiastical order.

IN the first days of society, and in its most improved period, when religion and philosophy have become duly united and firmly seated in the heart, the patriarchal and the priestly character may be often most usefully united; but in the intermediate æras, when so many myriads are ignorant of religion, or indifferent to it, or prejudiced against it, if there be not a well educated, respected, and authorised clergy, it will depart from the young intellect amid the pressure of worldly objects, and become associated with degrading superstitions in the vulgar and older minds. Alfred could not

at that time have pursued a wiser or more patriotic object than that of endeavouring to enlighten and improve the ecclesiastical body. CHAP.
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THE school which he established for his nobles³, and the masters which he provided for high and low, who were educated with his son Æthelweard⁴, are proofs of his desire to augment the knowledge of his country.

HIS invitations to his court, of learned foreigners and skilful artizans; his search around his dominions for men of literary attainments; and his munificent patronage to all whose talents came within his notice, concur to demonstrate his laudable anxiety to improve his people.

HE lived in an age, when to promote the general welfare was an idea which seldom influenced the conduct.⁵ His plans to benefit his subjects, were therefore counteracted by their prejudices and their ignorance. Many of his royal exhortations were not obeyed; even the castles which he advised, or ordered his nobility to build, to protect their own lands, against the Northmen, were reluctantly begun. It often happened that the ravages, which his advice

³ Scholæ quam ex multis suæ propriæ gentis nobilibus studiosissime congregaverat. Asser, 67.

⁴ Cum omnibus pene totius regionis nobilibus infantibus et etiam multis ignobilibus, sub diligenti magistrorum cura traditus est. Asser, 43.

⁵ This is a feature which Asser gives of his contemporaries, "Qui nullum aut parvum voluntarie pro communi regni necessitate vellent subire laborem." p. 58.

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was meant to prevent, occurred before the landholders would obey his foresight. Then, when they had lost their families and property, they mourned their folly with a repentance, says Asser, that could neither restore their slain relations, redeem their captive friends, nor even support themselves with common subsistence.⁶

BUT Alfred was not discouraged by the tardiness of his subjects. By mild expostulation, by reasoning, by gentle flattery, or by express command; or, in case of obstinate disobedience, by severe chastisement, he overcame the pertinacity of vulgar folly; and wisely made his bishops, earls, ministers, and public officers, exert themselves for the common benefit of all his kingdom.⁷ Among other things, he was inflexible in exacting from all a competence for their offices. To produce this, he compelled them to study literature. Even they who had been illiterate from their infancy, earls, governors, and ministers, were compelled to learn to read and write⁸, choosing rather to endure the painful toil, than to lose their preferment. If from age, or peculiar dulness of intellect, they could not be taught themselves, their son or some kinsman, or if none, some freeman or slave, educated for the purpose, was ordered to

⁶ Asser, 60.

⁷ Asser, 59.

⁸ So I construe the expressions, "*Literatoriæ arti student.*" Asser, 71.

recite before them Saxon books, both day and night.⁹

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HIS public demeanour was very affable, mixed with decorous pleasantry; he was eager to join in the investigation of things unknown¹⁰, for the curiosity of his mind was insuppressible.

MANY Franks, Frisians, and other neighbouring nations, willingly came to submit to his authority, both noble and ignoble. He loved them all like his own people, received them honourably, and gave them both money and power.¹¹

HIS bishops and clergy, his nobles and servants, he treated with paternal affection; he was indefatigable in his endeavours to educate such of their children as were in the royal court, in every valuable morality; and he himself did not disdain to assist in their scholastic tuition.¹²

HIS embassy to India, to the shrine of St. Thomas, is as expressive of his mind and public spirit as any other action of his life. No other potentate in Europe could in that day have conceived it; because no other had ac-

His em-
bassy to
India.

⁹ Asser, 71. These passages of Asser are very curious.

¹⁰ Et maxima et incomparabili contra omnes homines affabilitate atque jocunditate et ignotarum rerum investigationi solerter se jungebat. Asser, 44.

¹¹ Asser, 44.

¹² This I presume is the meaning of omnibus bonis moribus instituere et literis imbuere *solus* die noctuque inter cætera non desinebat. Asser, 44.

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quired that knowledge which would have interested them in a country so remote and unknown. The embassy displays not only the extent of Alfred's information, but that searching curiosity, which characterised his understanding.

THE journey is stated by several chroniclers. The Saxon Chronicle¹³, Florence of Worcester¹⁴, Radulph¹⁵, and Bromton¹⁶, simply mention, that Suithelm, the bishop of Shireburn, carried the benevolence of Alfred to India, to Saint Thomas, and returned in safety. Huntingdon¹⁷, and Alured of Beverley¹⁸, express that the embassy was sent in a discharge of a vow which the king had made. Matthew of Westminster¹⁹, and Malmsbury, mention the curiosities which Suithelm brought back with him.

MALMSBURY, who gives the fullest account of the incident, says that the king sent many

¹³ Sax. Chron. p. 86.

¹⁴ 883. Assero Scireburnensi episcopo defuncto succedit Suithelmus qui regis Alfredi elemosynam ad S. Thomam, Indiam detulit, indeque prospere retulit. Flor. Wig. 320.

¹⁵ Rad. Dic. 451. He dates it 887.

¹⁶ Bromton, 812.

¹⁷ Alfredus autem misit elemosynam suam Romæ et etiam in Indiam ad S. Thomam secundum votum quod fecerat quando hostilis exercitus hyemavit apud Londoniam. Hunt. 350.

¹⁸ Lib. vii. p. 106.

¹⁹ Matt. West. 333. He says, that Suithelm brought back precious stones. Malm. calls him Sighelm.

presents over sea to Rome, and to St. Thomas, in India; that Sighelm, the bishop of Shireburn, was his ambassador, who penetrated with great success to India, to the admiration of the age; and that he brought with him, on his return, many foreign gems and aromatic liquors, the produce of the country.²⁰ In another passage, Malmsbury declares, that some of those gems were to be seen in his days, in the monuments of the church.²¹

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IN the former editions of this work, for the purpose of verifying this extraordinary incident, a careful investigation was pursued, in order to show that it was long before believed that Saint Thomas had been in India; that in the age of Alfred he was presumed to have died there; and that at that time there were Christians living there. It was also proved that such journeys were in those days attempted, and the inference was drawn from these facts, that the assertions of our chroniclers were not counteracted by any improbability in their assertions of this remarkable embassy.

BUT the journeys and writings of the late

²⁰ Et trans mare Romam et ad Sanctum Thomam in Indiam multa munera misit. Legatus in hoc missus Sigelmus Schireburnensis episcopus cum magna prosperitate, quod quis hoc seculo miretur, Indiam penetravit: inde rediens exoticos splendores gemmarum et liquores aromatum, quorum illa humus ferax est, reportavit. De Gestis, p. 44.

²¹ Nonnullæ illarum adhuc in ecclesiæ monumentis visuntur. Malms. De Pont. 248.

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Claudius Buchanan, and of other travellers; and the subsequent efforts and correspondence of our Bible and Missionary Societies, have so completely confirmed the facts, not only that Syrian Christian churches were early founded in the Indian peninsula, but are still existing in the same parts, that it is unnecessary now to repeat our former collection of authorities.²²

²² In Alfred's reign, the following journey to Egypt and Palestine occurred. In 870, three monks, desirous to see the places so celebrated in the Christian writings, undertook a journey thither. Their itinerary, written by Bernard, one of the travellers, is extant. They first went to Mount Garganum, in which they found the church of St. Michael. This is near the Gulf of Manfredonia. An hundred and fifty miles brought them to Barre, then a city of the Saracens, but which had once been subject to the Beneventans. This is on the south-east side of Italy; they sought admission to the prince of the city, who was called a sultan, and obtained leave to prosecute their journey with letters to the chief of Alexandria and Babylon, describing their countenances, and the object of their journey.

From Barre, they walked ninety miles to the port of Tarentum, where they found six ships, two going to Tripoli, and two to other parts of Africa, with some captives. After thirty days sailing they reached Alexandria; here the master of the ship exacted six pieces of gold before he would let them leave it.

They produced to the governor of Alexandria the letter of the sultan of Barre, but it did them no good; a present of thirteen denarii a piece was more serviceable. Bernard remarks, that it was the custom of Alexandria to take the money by weight; he says, six of the solidi and denarii, which they carried out with them, weighed only three of those at Alexandria. The governor gave them letters to the chief of Babylon; but by Babylon, it is obvious that Bernard means the

No others of Alfred's foreign correspondencies have been transmitted to us, besides the compliment from the Jerusalem patriarch; except some donations from the pope²³, and several messages and presents from Alfred to Rome. The king appears to have sent em-

city of that name in Egypt, and not the famous Babylon which spread along the Euphrates.

Sailing up the Nile south for six days, they came to the city of Egyptian Babylon. The guards of the place conducted them to the governor; their letters were useless, and they were sent to prison; a present of denarii, as before, released them. In return for this, he made them out letters, which, he said, whoever saw, would in no place or town exact any more. They could not leave this Babylon without a sealed permission, which some more denarii were required to obtain.

Bernard proceeds to describe his journey from Egypt to Jerusalem. It is shortly; back up the Nile in three days to Sitinuth; thence to Maalla; thence they sailed to Amiamate. Quæ habuit ab aquilone mare; thence sailed to Tanis, to Faramea; here was a multitude of camels. The desert of six days journey began from this city; it had only palm-trees; in the middle were two hospitia; the earth was fertile to Gaza; thence to Alariza, to Ramula, to Emaus Castle, to Jerusalem. He mentions one trait of Jerusalem, which shows, that some intercourse was maintained by devotion between these distant places, and the west of Europe. He says, "we were received there in the mansion of hospitality of the most glorious Charlemagne, in which all are received who visit this place for devotion, and who speak the Roman language. He says there was a church near it, with a most noble library from the same empire. From Jerusalem they sailed in sixty days, with an unfavourable wind, to Italy."

²³ Asser, 39. The pope, at Alfred's request, liberated the Saxon school in Rome from all pecuniary payments. *Ib.*

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WHEN the measures are mentioned by which Alfred endeavoured to excite in his subjects a love of letters, it will not be forgotten that the University of Oxford has been connected with his memory.

THE concurring testimonies of some respectable authors seem to prove, that he founded public schools in this city; and therefore the University, which has long existed with high celebrity, and which has enriched every department of literature and science by the talents it has nourished, may claim Alfred as one of its authors, and original benefactors.

BUT this incident, plain and intelligible as it appears to be, is environed with a controversy which demands some consideration; for it involves nothing less than the decision of the superior antiquity of the two Universities of England. We leave to abler pens the determination of the dispute, and shall only notice in the note a few particulars concerning the first periods of the contest, and the point on which it turned.²⁵

His laws,

THIS indefatigable king made also a code of laws, with the concurrence of his witenagemot

²⁴ Asser, 55. The Saxon Chronicle states, that in the years 883, 887, 888, 889, 890, Alfred's alms or letters were sent to Rome.

²⁵ See note 42 at the end of this chapter.

or parliament, which has been called his Dom-boc. In this, for the first time, he introduced into the Anglo-Saxon legislation, not only the decalogue, but also the principal provisions of the Mosaic legislation, contained in the three chapters which follow the decalogue, with such modifications as were necessary to adapt them to the Anglo-Saxon manners. In the laws attached to those he mentions, that with the concurrence of his witena-gemot, he had collected together, and committed to writing, the regulations which his ancestors had established; selected such of them as he approved, and rejected the rest. He adds that he showed them to all his witena, who declared that it pleased them all that these should be observed. Forty heads of laws then follow, on the most important subjects of the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence and legislation, obviously tending to increase the national civilisation.²⁶

WHEN Alfred regained his throne, and with His police, that, the kingdom of Mercia, he found that the Danish invasions had so destroyed the ancient police of the kingdom, and the regular habits of the inhabitants, that the Anglo-Saxons were infesting each other with predatory depredations.²⁷

²⁶ See those in Wilkin's Leg. Sax. p. 28—46. I cannot doubt that these compose the dom-boc which some ancient writers alluded to.

²⁷ Ingulf, 28.; Malmsbury, 44.; and the Chronicle of

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THE means which he took to remedy this evil, and also to provide an efficient force to repress the Danes, are stated to have been some modification of the ancient provincial divisions of England, which had long before been known as shires. The alterations which he made with these are not detailed. But it is expressly declared that he began the system of dividing them into hundreds, and these into ten parts or tithings. Under these nominal divisions, the population of the country was arranged. Every person was directed to belong to some hundred or tithing. Every hundred and tithing were pledged to the preservation of the public peace and security in their districts, and were made answerable for the conduct of their several inhabitants. In consequence of this arrangement, the inhabitants were speedily called out to repel an invader, and every criminal accused was sure to be apprehended. If he was not produced by the hundred or tithing to which he was attached, the inhabitants of these divisions incurred a general mulct. Thus every person in the district was interested in seizing or discovering the offender. If he fled, he must go to other districts, where, not having been marshalled within their jurisdiction, he would be known and punished as an outlaw, because unpledged; for he who was not pledged by

Joannes de Oxenedes. Cott. MSS. Nero, D. 2. This chronicle is not much more than an abridgment of Malmsbury.

some hundred and tithing, experienced all the severity of the law.²⁸ It is added to this statement, that Alfred divided the provincial prefects into two officers, judges and ²⁹ sheriffs. Until his time there were only sheriffs. He separated, by the appointment of justices or judges, the judicial from the executing department of the law, and thus provided an improved administration of law and justice. That golden bracelets were hung up in the public roads, and were not pilfered, is mentioned as a fact, which evidenced the efficacy of his police.

THE unsettled state of society in Saxon-England, and that twilight of mind which every where appears at this period, may have justified these severe provisions. They are, however, liable to such objections, that though we may admit them to have been necessary to Alfred,

²⁸ Ingulf, 28. Malmsb. 44.

²⁹ *Præfectos vero provinciarum qui antea vicedomini vocabantur in duo officia divisit, id est, in iudices quos nunc justiciarios vocamus et in vice comites qui adhuc idem nomen retinent.* Ingulf, 28. We will briefly remark here, that the Welsh anciently had the territorial divisions of cantref, a hundred, which contained two cymmwd; each of these had twelve maenawr, and two tref; in every maenawr were four tref, or towns; in every town four gafael, each of which contained four rhandir; every rhandir was composed of sixteen acres. Thus every cantref contained, as the name imports, an hundred towns, or 25,600 acres. *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 157, 158. The preface to these laws states South Wales to have contained sixty-four cantrefs, and North Wales eighteen. *Ibid.* p. 1. The cantref and the cymmwd had each a court to determine controversies. *Ibid.* p. 389.

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no modern government can wish to have them imitated. They may have suppressed robbery; they may have perpetuated public peace; but they were calculated to keep society in a bondage the most pernicious. They must have prevented that free intercourse, that incessant communication, that unrestricted travelling, which have produced so much of our political and literary prosperity. They made every hundred and tithing little insulated populations, to which all strangers were odious. By causing every member of each district to become responsible for the conduct of every other, they converted neighbours into spies; they incited curiosity to pry into private conduct; and as selfishness is generally malignant, when in danger of meeting injury, they must have tended to legalise habits of censoriousness and acrimonious calumny.

THAT Alfred was assiduous to procure to his people the blessing of a correct and able administration of justice, we have the general testimony of Asser. He not only gave the precept, but he exhibited the example; he was a patient and minute arbiter in judicial investigations, and this, chiefly for the sake of the poor, to whose affairs, amongst his other duties, he day and night earnestly applied himself.³⁰

WHEN we reflect that Alfred had, in the beginning of his reign, transgressed on this point, he claims our applause for his noble self-correction. It was highly salutary to his sub-

³⁰ Asser, 69.

jects; "for," says Asser, "in all his kingdom, the poor had no helpers, or very few besides him. The rich and powerful, ingrossed with their own concerns, were inattentive to their inferiors. They studied their private not the public good."³¹ CHAP.
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ALFRED applied to the administration of justice, because it was then so little understood, and so little valued by the people, that both noble and inferior persons were accustomed to dispute pertinaciously with each other in the very tribunals of justice. What the earls and legal officers adjudged, was disregarded. All resorted to the king's judgment, which was then respectfully fulfilled. Burthensome as so many legal appeals must have been, he never hesitated to sacrifice his own comfort for the welfare of his subjects. With great discernment, and wonderful patience, he examined every dispute; he reviewed the adjudications made by others in his absence. When he saw that the judges had erred, he called them mildly to him, and either personally, or by confidential persons, inquired if they had erred from ignorance, or malevolence, or avarice. When he found that ignorance had produced a wrong decision, he rebuked the judges for accepting an office for which they were unqualified, and commanded them to improve themselves by study, or to abandon their offices.³²

³¹ Asser, 69.

³² Asser, 70, 71.

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THE statement of Asser is in general terms. We have already alluded to the ancient law book, the *Mirroir des Justices*, which presents to us many instances of Alfred's punishing judges for misconduct. Andrew Horne, who wrote this work in Norman French, in the time of Edward the Second³³, has been attacked, with severity, by Dr. Hickes, because he makes the institution of juries to be anterior to the conquest.³⁴ The objections of this respectable critic are, however, weakened by the recollections that lord Coke and Spelman, before Hickes wrote, and bishop Nicholson³⁵ since, have maintained, with others, that the Anglo-Saxons had juries, and that Horne professes to have taken his facts from the records of the Court.

SOME of the cases stated in the *Mirror*, show that Alfred was assiduous in protecting the independence, the purity, and the rights of jurymen. He punished capitally some judges for deciding criminal cases by an arbitrary violation of the right of jury.

“ HE hanged Cadwine, because he condemned Hachwy to death without the assent of all the jurors, in a case where he put himself upon the jury of twelve men, and because Cadwine re-

³³ It was printed in London, 1642. A translation appeared in 1646.

³⁴ See Hickes's *Dissertatio Epistolaris*, p. 34—43.

³⁵ See the bishop's preface to Wilkins's *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*.

moved three who wished to save him against the nine, for three others into whose jury this Hachwy did not put himself.”

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“HE hanged Markes, because he adjudged During to death by twelve men not sworn.”

“HE hanged Freberne, because he adjudged Harpin to death when the jurors were in doubt about their verdict; for when in doubt, we ought rather to save than condemn.”³⁶

THE numerous occupations, both public and private, to which this active-minded king directed his attention, seem sufficient to have occupied the longevity of a Nestor. Yet Alfred died at the age of fifty-two, and his life was literally a life of disease. The ficus molested him severely in his childhood.³⁷ After distressing him for many years, this malady disappeared, but at the age of twenty was replaced by another of the most tormenting nature. It attacked him, before all the people, suddenly with an immense pain, during, and probably caused by, the protracted banquets, “day and night,” of his nuptial festivities; and never left him.³⁸ Its seat was internal and

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decease.
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³⁶ Mirror, p. 296—298.

³⁷ Asser, p. 40.

³⁸ *Post diuturna die noctuque convivium subito et immensa atque omnibus medicis incognito confestim coram omni populo correptus est dolore.* Asser, 40. It was afflicting him in the forty-fifth year of his life, when Asser wrote the paragraph which mentioned it. The expressions of Asser, “daily banquets by day and night,” imply that they were continued for some days; and this exhausting continuation may have given Alfred's constitution the irretrievable blow.

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invisible³⁹; but its agony was incessant. Such was the dreadful anguish it perpetually produced, that if for one short hour it happened to intermit, the dread and horror of its inevitable return poisoned the little interval of ease.⁴⁰ The skill of his Saxon physicians was unable to detect its nature, or to alleviate its pain. Alfred had to endure it⁴¹ unrelieved. It is not among the least admirable circumstances of this extraordinary man, that he withstood the fiercest hostilities that ever distressed a nation, cultivated literature, discharged his public duties, and executed all his schemes for the improvement of his people, amid a perpetual agony, so distressing, that it would have disabled a common man from the least exertion.⁴²

³⁹ Asser describes it as *incognitum enim erat omnibus qui tunc aderant et etiam huc usque quotidie cernentibus*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ *Sed si aliquando Dei misericordia unius diei aut noctis vel etiam unius horæ intervallo illa infirmitas seposita fuerat, timor tamen ac tremor illius execrabilis doloris unquam eum non deserit.* Asser, 42.

⁴¹ From this disorder continuing so long with such acute pain, without destroying him sooner; from the period of his life when it began; from its internal situation; from its horrible agony, and from its not appearing to have ceased till his death, some conjecture may be formed of it; at least, I understand, there are some diseases incident to the human frame, as internal cancer, or some derangement of the biliary functions, to which these circumstances are applicable.

⁴² We have referred to this place a cursory review of the former discussions between Oxford and Cambridge, which have been connected with the memory of Alfred. This dispute did not burst out publicly till the reign of Elizabeth. When

the queen visited Cambridge in 1564, the orator of the university, unfortunately declared in his harangue, that Cambridge truly claimed a superior antiquity to Oxford. Enraged that an attempt should have been insidiously made to prepossess the ear of majesty to its prejudice, Oxford retaliated the aggression, by asserting, in a written composition, to the queen, when she came to the university in 1566, that it was Oxford, and Oxford only, which could truly boast the earliest foundation.

Wars, horrid wars! became then the business and the amusement of every student. Cantabs and Oxonians arranged themselves to battle, and every weapon of polemical erudition and polemical fury, was raised against each other.

Caius, one of the leaders in this discussion, published a quarto, in defence of Cambridge, in 1574. He said, he came to restore peace; as if, by assuring the world that Cambridge was in the right, he could ever give tranquillity to Oxford.

Oxford denied the right of an insidious partisan to be a peace-maker; and at last Brian Twyne appeared, with a book as large and as full as that of Caius, in which the glory of Oxford was sturdily and angrily maintained. Many combatants at various intervals succeeded, and the conflict became as ardent as, from the fragility of the materials, it was ineffectual.

Some of the friends of Cambridge managed to see the first stones of their university laid in the 173d year after the flood. Others, however, who were not blessed with optics which had the faculty of seeing what had never been visible, very wisely postponed the existence of their favourite till about four centuries before the Christian æra. At that period, they found out that one Cantaber, a royal Spanish emigrant, who came to England in the days of Gurguntius, had sent for Greek philosophers from Athens, and given to Cambridge a local habitation, and a name.

It was easy for Oxford to object, that Cantaber was but one of those airy nothings which the poet or the antiquary, in his phrenzy, discerns. It was not more difficult to laugh at the wise and learned giants, who were placed as the aborigines of our island, and who first cultivated letters. But the

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Oxonian champion did not content himself with destroying all the superstructures of Cambridge vanity. The heralds of national ancestry are as fond of their own chimeras, as they are intolerant of the antiquarian progeny of others. Hence, though the advocate of Oxford denied to Cambridge its Cantaber, he conceived it to be just to claim for Oxford a colony of Greek philosophers, who came into the island with Brutus, and established a college at Cricklade, which was afterwards translated to Bello Situm, where Oxford now stands. See Caius Ant. Cantab. and Twyne's Antiq. Acad. Oxon.

The fame of Oxford was, however, not wholly intrusted to phantoms. A basis more secure was found for it in a passage printed under the name of Asser; and it is this unfortunate passage which has connected the dispute with the history of Alfred.

An edition of Asser was published from a MS. of Camden, in 1603; in which a paragraph appeared, stating, that in 886, a discord arose at Oxford between Grymbold and his learned friends whom he had brought with him, and those ancient schoolmen whom he found there, and who refused to obey entirely his institutions. Three years the dissension lasted. Alfred, to appease it, went to Oxford. The ancient schoolmen contended, that before the arrival of Grymbold, letters had flourished there, though the scholars had been fewer; and they proved by the indubitable testimony of ancient annals, that the ordinations and institutes of this place had been established by some pious and erudite men, as Gildas, Melkin, Nennius, Kentigern, and others, who there grew old in letters; and that St. Germain, who resided half a year at Oxford, had also approved of them. The king recommended peace; but Grymbold, dissatisfied, withdrew to Winchester.

Such is the import of this contested paragraph. If it had been genuine it gave the evidence of Asser, that there had been public schools at Oxford, at least in the fifth and sixth centuries, when Germain and the others lived. Now Cambridge had no such plausible document as this. Its friends had indeed talked of Arthur's charters, but these were soon decried as surreptitious. The most ancient historical dress

that it could assume, with any decorous attention to probability, was Bede's paragraph, about Sigebert establishing schools in East Anglia; and Sigebert lived above a century after Gildas.

But unfortunately for the fame of Oxford, Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, had published, in Saxon types, an edition of Asser, in 1574, from a MS. in which this passage was not to be found. The ancient MS. of Asser, in the Cotton Library, which has been thought to have been written within a century after its author's death, was also without this clause. It was Otho, A. 12, since burnt.

Here, then, was the point of an elaborate controversy; was this passage written by Asser? Did Parker insidiously omit it, or did Camden surreptitiously insert it, or was it really wanting in the one MS. and really existing in the other? The controversy had begun before Parker published his Asser, but it was then in its infancy. When Camden's Asser appeared, it was raging in all its violence. Camden's MS. which he thought to have been of the age of Richard II. was never produced after it was printed; and no other MSS. can now be obtained to determine the question. See Wood, *Hist. Ox.* p. 9.

Oxford and Cambridge have since produced such great scholars in every department of knowledge, and such distinguished men in the most honourable paths of active life, that controversies like these are felt to be unworthy of their attention, and are not now even thought of. The point of emulation is known to be, which can *now* produce the ablest men; not which first began their formation.

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CHAP. I.

The Reign of EDWARD the Elder.

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ALFRED had been called to the crown in preference to the children of his elder brother. Their pretensions were equally neglected at his death, and Edward, his son, who had distinguished himself against Hastings, was chosen by the nobles as their king.¹

ETHELWOLD, one of the disregarded princes, in opposition to the decision of the Anglo-Saxon witena, aspired to the crown, and seized Wimburn, declaring that he would keep it or ²perish. But when the king advanced with an army against him, he fled, at night, to the Northumbrian Danes, and, exciting their sympathy, was appointed their sovereign at York, over all their other kings and chiefs.³

¹ A primatis electus. Ethelwerd, 847. He was crowned at the Whitsuntide after his father's death. Ibid.

² Sax. Ch. 100. Hen. Hunt. 352. Matt. West. 351. At Wimburn, he possessed himself of a nun by force, and married her. Ibid.

³ Hen. Hunt. 352. Matt. West. 351. Sax. Ch. 100. Flor. 337. The king replaced the nun in her retreat.

By this incident he became formidable both to Edward and his people. The Northmen colonists by occupying all Northumbria and East Anglia, independently of Edward, possessed one-third part of England; and if Ethelwold's abilities had equalled his ambition, or if Edward had been a weaker character, the Northmen might have gained the sovereignty of the island. But Ethelwold seems not to have long pleased his new subjects; for he was afterwards on the seas a pirate ⁴, and sailed to France in quest of partisans to distress the king.⁵ He returned with a great fleet and subdued ⁶ Essex; persuading the East Anglian Danes to join him he entered Mercia and ravaged as far as Cricklade. He even passed the Thames into Wessex, and plundered in Wiltshire; but the Anglo-Saxons not supporting him, he returned. The army of Edward followed him, and ravaged, in retaliation, to the fens of Lincolnshire. When the king withdrew, he directed his forces not to separate. The Kentish troops neglected his orders, and remained after the others had retired. Ethelwold eagerly attacked them with superior numbers. The Kentish men were overpowered, but their defence was desperate. Their chiefs fell; and the author of the quarrel also

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⁴ In exilium trusus pirates adduxerat. Malm. 46.

⁵ Matt. West. 351.

⁶ Hunt. 352. Sax. Ch. 100.

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perished in his victory.⁷ His fate released the island from the destructive competition, and a peace, two years afterwards, restored amity between the Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Danes.⁸

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BUT war was soon renewed between the rival powers. With his Mercians and West Saxons, Edward, in a five weeks depredation of Northumbria, destroyed and plundered extensively. In the next year, the Northerns devastated ⁹Mercia. A misconception of the Danes brought them within the reach of the king's sword. While he was tarrying in Kent, he collected one hundred ships, which he sent to guard the south-eastern coast ¹⁰, probably to prevent new

⁷ Sax. Ch. 101. Hunt. 352. Eohric, the Anglo-Danish king, fell in the struggle. Ethelwerd places this battle at Holme, 848. Holme in Saxon means a river island. In Lincolnshire there is one called Axelholme. Camd. 474. The printed Saxon Chronicle makes a battle at Holme in 902, besides the battle wherein Ethelwold fell; but the MS. Chron. Tib. b. iv. omits the battle in 902. So the MS. Tib. b. i. With these Florence agrees, and therefore the passage of 902, in the printed Chronicle, may be deemed a mistake.

⁸ Sax. Chron. Matt. West. adds, that the king immediately afterwards reduced those who had rebelled against him: Et maxime cives Londonienses et Oxonienses, p. 352. In 905, Ealhswythe, the widow of Alfred, died; and her brother, Athulf, an ealdorman, in 903. Sax. Ch. 101. She had founded a monastery of nuns at Winchester. Mailros, 146.

⁹ Sax. Ch. 102. Hunt. 352. The MS. Saxon Chronicles mention, that the English defeated at this time the Danes at Totanheale. Florence and Hoveden place this conflict and place in Staffordshire.

¹⁰ Sax. Ch. 102.

invasions. The Danes, fancying the great body of his forces to be on the seas, advanced into the country to the Avon, and plundered without apprehension, and passed onwards to the Severn. Edward immediately sent a powerful army to attack them; his orders were obeyed. The Northerns were surprised into a fixed battle at Wodensfield, and were defeated, with the slaughter of many thousands. Two of their kings fell, brothers of the celebrated Ingwar, and therefore children of Ragnar Lodbrog, and many earls and officers.¹¹ The Anglo-Saxons sung hymns on their great victory.¹²

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THE event of this battle established the superiority of Edward over his dangerous neighbours, and checked the progress of their power. He pursued the plans which Alfred had devised for the protection of his throne. As the Danes possessed the north of England, from the Humber to the Tweed, and the eastern districts, from the Ouse to the sea, he protected his own frontiers by a line of fortresses. In the places where irruptions into Mercia and Wessex were most practicable, and therefore where a prepared defence was more needed, he built burghs or fortifications. He filled these with appointed soldiers, who, when invaders approached, marched

¹¹ Flor. 340. Ethelw. 848. Sax. Ch. 103.

¹² Hunt. 353. Ethelwerd's account of Edward's battles have several poetical phrases, as if he had translated some fragments of these songs.

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out in junction with the provincials to chastise them. No time was lost in waiting for the presence of the king, or of the earls of the county; they were empowered to act of themselves on every emergency, and by this plan of vigilance, energy, and co-operation, the invaders were so easily defeated, that they became a derision to the English soldiery.¹³ Ethelfleda co-operated in thus fortifying the country. She became a widow in 912, but she continued in the sovereignty of Mercia¹⁴, and displayed great war-like activity.

THE position of these fortresses, which soon became inhabited towns, demonstrates their utility. Wigmore, in Herefordshire; Bridgnorth and Cherbury, in Shropshire; Edesbury, in Cheshire; and Stafford and Wedesborough, in Staffordshire; were well chosen to coerce the Welsh upon the western limits. Runcorne and Thelwall, in Cheshire, and Bakewell, in Derbyshire, answered the double purpose of awing Wales, and of protecting that part of the north frontier of Mercia from the incursions of the Northumbrian Danes. Manchester, Tamworth in Staffordshire, Leicester, Nottingham, and Warwick, assisted to strengthen Mercia on this northern frontier, and Stamford, Towcester, Bedford, Hartford, Colchester, Witham, and

¹³ Malmsh. 46.

¹⁴ Sax. Ch. 103. Ethelred, her husband, had been long infirm before his death. Hunt. 353.

Malden, presented a strong boundary of defence against the hostilities of the East Anglian Danes. The three last places watched three rivers important for their affording an easy debarkation from foreign parts.

C H A P.

I.
Edward
the Elder.

910.

THE strength of Edward was tried by an invasion of Northmen from Armorica, and his military policy was evidenced by its issue. Two chieftains led the hostile fleet round Cornwall into the Severn, and devastated North Wales. They debarked and plundered in Herefordshire. The men of Hereford, Gloucester, and the nearest burghs or fortified places, defeated them with the loss of one of their chiefs, and the brother of the other, and drove the rest into a wood, which they besieged. Edward directed armed bodies to watch the Severn, from Cornwall to the Avon. The enemy endeavoured one night to escape in two divisions, but the English overtook them in Somersetshire. One was destroyed in Watchet; the other in Porlock-bay. The remainder sheltered themselves in a neighbouring island, till, urged by famine, they fled to South-Wales, whence in the autumn they sailed to Ireland.¹⁵

918.

THE Anglo-Saxon monarchy received new security from Edward's incorporation of Mercia with Wessex, on Ethelfleda's death.

920.

BOTH Edward and Ethelfleda had many

¹⁵ Sax. Chron. 105. Flor. 343.

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Edward
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920.

struggles with the Northmen in England; but their triumphs were easy, for they attacked enemies, not in their compact strength, but in their scattered positions. Thus Ethelfleda warred with them in Derby. In assaulting the castle, four of her bravest and most esteemed generals fell, but she still urged the combat, and at last mastered the place: she also obtained Leicester¹⁶, Derby, and even York.

EDWARD endured, and perhaps provoked similar conflicts. The Danes attacked his fortress at Towcester, but the garrison and the provincials repulsed them. In Buckinghamshire, the invasion was formidable, and many districts were overrun, till Edward rescued his people by new victories. In some parts they seemed to copy his policy. They built hostile fortresses at Huntingdon, and at Temesford in Bedfordshire; and assailed Bedford; but the garrison and its supporters defeated them with slaughter.¹⁷

A PECULIAR spirit of hostility seemed in the latter years of his reign to have excited the Anglo-Danes; for scarcely had they experienced the defeats already noticed, before another aggression was attempted, and was¹⁸ punished.

¹⁶ Hunt. 353, 354. Sax. Chron. 106. Ingulf says of her: "Ipsam etiam urbibus extruendis, castellis muniendis, ac exercitibus ducendis deditam, sexum mutasse putaris," p. 28.

¹⁷ Matt. West. 358. Sax. Chron. 107.

¹⁸ See Sax. Chron. 108, 109.

The progress of Edward's power endangering their own, may have caused their animosity. But happily for the Anglo-Saxons and Edward, their love of freedom, and the independence of their chiefs, made their kings weak in actual power, and prevented their permanent union under one sovereign. Before they retrieved their former disasters, the king collected a large army from the burghs nearest his object, and attacked them at Temesford. A king, and some earls, perished against him; the survivors were taken, with the city. Pressing on his advantages, he raised another powerful force from Kent, Surrey, Essex, and their burghs, and stormed and mastered Colchester. The East Anglian Danes marched against Malden, in alliance with some vikings, whom they had invited from the seas¹⁹; but they failed. Edward secured his conquests by new fortifications; and the submission of many districts augmented his realms, and enfeebled his competitors.²⁰ The East Anglian Danes not only swore to him, "that they would will what he should²¹ will,"

CHAP.
I.
Edward
the Elder:
920.

¹⁹ *Legabrode micel hepe hine of Eart Englum, ægðer ge thær land heper, ge thapa Wicinga the hie him to fultume arpanen hæþon.* Sax. Chron. 108.

²⁰ Sax. Chron. 109. Thus the king went to Pasham in Northamptonshire, and staid there while a burgh was made at Towcester; then Thurferth Eorl and his followers, and all the army from Northampton to the river Weland in that county, sought him to Hlaforde, and to Mundboran. Ibid.

²¹ *Tha hie eall tha polbon tha he polbe.* Ibid. 109.

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Edward
the Elder.

and promised immunity to all who were living under his protection, but the Danish army at Cambridge separately chose him for their lord and patron.²²

922.

THESE examples of submission spread. When the king was at Stamford, constructing a burgh, all the people, about the north of the river, received his dominion. The Welsh kings yielded to his power. Howel, Cleauc, and Jeothwell, with their subjects, submitted to him as their

924.

chief lord²³, and the king of the Scots chose him for his father and lord. If princes almost beyond the reach of his ambition acquiesced in his superiority, it is not surprising that the kings of Northumbria and the Strathclyd population should follow the same impulse.²⁴ After

²² *Dine zecear rýndeplice him to Blaporde and to Mundeopan.* Sax. Chron. 109.

²³ Sax. Chron. 110. The Welsh had previously suffered from the warlike Ethelfleda. She took Brecon and a Welsh queen, and signalised herself afterwards in another invasion. Howel was the celebrated Howel Dha, the legislator of Wales. He held both Powys and South Wales. Clydauc was his brother. Wynne's Hist. 44, 45. Powys and Dinefawr were tributary to the king of Aberfraw. The laws of Howel Dha mention the tribute to the king of London thus: "Sixty-three pounds is the tribute from the king of Aberfraw to the king of London, when he took his kingdom from him; and besides this, except dogs, hawks, and horses, nothing else shall be exacted." Lib. iii. c. 2. p. 199. Wotton's edition.

²⁴ Mailros, 147. Saxon Chron. 110. Flor. 347. Matt. West. 359. Hoveden, 422. Malmesbury, 46. Ingulf, 28. Bromton, 835.

these successes, Edward died at Farrington in Berkshire.²⁵ CHAP.

I.
Edward
the Elder.

924.

EDWARD the elder must be ranked among the founders of the English monarchy. He executed with judicious vigour the military plans of his father; and not only secured the Anglo-Saxons from a Danish sovereignty, but even prepared the way for that destruction of the Anglo-Danish power which his descendants achieved.

It has been said of Edward, that he was inferior to his father in letters, but superior to him in war, glory, and power.²⁶ This assertion is rather an oratorical point than an historical fact. Edward had never to struggle with such warfare as that during which Alfred ascended his throne, in which he lost it, and by whose suppression he regained it. Edward encountered but the fragments of that tremendous mass which Alfred first broke.

EDWARD had many children besides Athelstan. He was twice married. His first marriage produced two sons, Ethelward and Edwin, and six daughters. Four of the latter were united to

²⁵ The year of his death is differently stated: 924 is given by Matt. West. 359.; Bromton, 837.; Flor. 347.; Malm. 48.; Mail. 147.; Chron. Petrib. 25.; and by the MS. Chron. Tib. b. i. and also b. iv. The printed Saxon Chronicle has 925, p. 110. Hoveden puts 919, and Ethelwerd 926. The authorities for 924 preponderate.

²⁶ Malmsb. 46. Flor. 336. Ingulf, 28.

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Edward
the Elder.

924.

continental potentates.²⁷ His second ²⁸ union was followed by the birth of two more sons, Edmund and Edred, who in the course of time succeeded to his sceptre ; and of three daughters. One of these, a lady of exquisite ²⁹ beauty, was wedded to the prince of Aquitain.

EDWARD imitated his father as well in his plan of education as in his government. The first part of his daughters' lives was devoted to letters : they were afterwards taught to use the needle, and the distaff. His sons received the best literary education of the day, that they might be well qualified for the offices of government to which they were born.³⁰

²⁷ Malmsb. 47.

²⁸ His second wife was Æadgifu, whose will is printed in Saxon, with a Latin translation, in the appendix to Lye's Saxon Dictionary.

²⁹ Edgivam speciositatis eximiæ mulierem. Malmsb. 47.

³⁰ Malmsb. 47. Edward was for some time under an excommunication from Rome, for keeping his bishoprics vacant. The king appeased the pope by filling seven sees in one day. Malmsb. 48. Edward was buried in the same monastery where his father and brother Ethelwerd lay. Ibid.

CHAP. II.

The Reign of ÆTHELSTAN.

IMMEDIATELY after Edward's interment, CHAP.
II.
Æthelstan.
924.
Ethelward, the eldest son of his first marriage, the pattern of the illustrious Alfred, in manners, countenance, and acquisitions, was taken away from the hopes of his countrymen.¹ On his death, the Anglo-Saxon sceptre was given by the witena-gemot to Athelstan, and he was crowned at Kingston. He was thirty years of age at his accession. His father's will directed the choice of the approving nobles.²

ÆTHELSTAN, the eldest but illegitimate³ son of Edward, was born in Alfred's life-time. He could be only six years of age when his grandfather died, and yet, interested by his beauty

¹ Malmsb. 46. Flor. 347. Sax. Ch. 111. Malmsbury says, the prince died in a few days after his father. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. b. iv. particularises sixteen days, "rythe hƿaþe ƿæp ƿeƿon ýmbe 16 ƿaƿar æt Oxanƿorþa."

² Malmsb. 48, 49.

³ His mother was a shepherd's daughter, of extraordinary beauty. Malmsb. 52. Bromton, 831. Matt. West. 351. She is called Egwina, illustri femina by H. Silgrave, MS. Cleop. A. 12., and in J. Bever's Chron. MSS. Harl. 641. It was her daughter who married Sigtryg. Ibid.

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924.

and manners, Alfred had invested him prematurely with the dignity of knighthood, and given him a purple vestment, a jewelled belt, and a Saxon sword, with a golden sheath. His aunt, Ethelfleda, joined with her husband in superintending his education; and the attainments of Athelstan reflected honour on their attentions.⁴

THE Anglo-Saxon sovereign became a character of dignity and consequence in Europe, in the person of Athelstan. His connections with the most respectable personages on the Continent, give to his reign a political importance.

SIGTRYG, the son of Ingwar⁵, and grandson of Ragnar Lodbrog, was a reigning king in Northumbria at the accession of Athelstan. He is chiefly known in the Saxon annals, for having murdered his brother⁶; and in Irish history, for his piratical depredations.⁷ He, therefore, deserves the character of barbarian, both in mind and in nation.⁸ Athelstan, however, to con-

⁴ Malmsb. 49.

⁵ He is named the son of Ivar in the Annals of Ulster. See them, p. 65, 66, 67.

⁶ 914. Niel rex occisus est a fratre Sihtrico. Sim. Dun. 133. So Huntingdon, 354. The Annals of Ulster contain a similar incident, which they date in 887, p. 65. They call the brother Godfred. Whether this is a misnomer, or whether Sigtryg perpetrated two fratricides, I cannot decide.

⁷ See the Annals of Ulster.

⁸ So Malmsbury entitles him, *gente et animo barbarus*, p. 50.

ciliate his friendship during the first years of his government, gave him his own sister in marriage. Their nuptials were celebrated with magnificence.⁹ Perhaps the circumstance of the king's birth, and the existence of legitimate brethren, disposed him to court the alliance, rather than to encounter the enmity, of the Anglo-Danes, while his power was young. Sigtryg embraced Christianity on the occasion; but soon repenting, put away his wife, and resumed his idolatry.¹⁰ Roused by the insult, Athelstan prepared to attack him; but Sigtryg died before he invaded.¹¹ His sons fled before the king; the warlike Anlaf into Ireland, and Godefrid into Scotland.

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
924.

ATHELSTAN pursued Godefrid; he sent messages to Eugenius, king of the Cumbri, and to Constantine, king of the Scots, to demand the fugitives. The Scottish prince obeyed the necessity, and came with homage to England. Godefrid, with a friend, escaped during the journey; and endeavoured, but in vain, to in-

⁹ Hoveden, 422. Flor. 328. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. b. iv. mentions the place and the day of this marriage. It says, that the two kings met and concluded the nuptials at Tamworth, on 30th of January, "925, hæp Æthelstan cýning 7 Sihtric Nopthhymbra cýning heo geramnodon æt Tamepeopthtize, 3 kal. Febpuarn 7 Æthelstan hýr ppeortop him forgear." MSS. Tib. b. iv.

¹⁰ Matt. West. 360.

¹¹ 926. Sihtricus vita decessit. Flor. 348. The Annals of Ulster express it thus: "926. Sigtryg O'Ivar died in his old age," p. 67.

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924.

terest York in his favour. Retiring from this city, he was besieged, but again eluded the danger. His friend perished at sea; the prince, after as much misery on the waters as upon land, submitted to Athelstan, and was honourably received at his court. Four days' enjoyment satiated him with the charms of civilised life. His early habits impelled him to abandon that tranquillity which is so grateful to the cultured mind, and he fled to maritime piracy.¹²

ATHELSTAN exerted his power with an effect to which Edward's superiority had never reached. He drove Ealdred from Bebbanburh, demolished the castle at York¹³, and added Northumbria to his paternal dominions.¹⁴

¹² Malmsh. 50.

¹³ Malmsh. 50. In Edward's reign Reignwald, a pagan king, came with a great fleet and conquered York. Two of his leaders are mentioned, Scula, and the cruel Onlafbald, to whom he gave possessions. He drove out Aldred and his brother, and defeated Constantine. Ibid. 74. Sim. Dun. 23. This was in 919. Ibid. 133. Reignwald had before attacked Dublin. Ibid. In 921, he submitted to Edward. Ibid. 153. The Annals of Ulster state, in 917, that the Gals, from Ireland, attacked the Scotch, and Northern Saxons, and that Reginald M'Beolach, one of the leaders of the Gals, attacked the Scotch and Saxons in the rear with great slaughter, p. 66.

¹⁴ Matt. West. 360. Flor. 348. The MS. Tib. b. iv. gives a passage in Saxon not in the printed Chronicle, but of the same import with the Latin of Florence, ad an. 926. On comparing the two MS. Chronicles of Tib. b. i. and Tib. b. iv. I find that they contain in several places passages which are no where else preserved, but in Florence, or Matthew of

BUT Athelstan was not permitted to enjoy his triumph unmolested. The Northmen chieftains saw that the progress of Athelstan's power was advancing to their complete subjection. The states on the Baltic were still full of fierce and active adventurers, who had to seek fame and fortune in other regions; and descendants of Ragnar Lodbrog yet existed, both enterprising and popular. These circumstances occasioned a great effort to be made against Athelstan, which not only threatened to emancipate Northumbria from his authority, but to overwhelm his inherited government. The greatness of the confederacy, and the preparations by which it was supported, excited great attention in Europe, as well as in England. It is narrated in a Northern Saga, as well as in the English chronicles; and, from a careful comparison of all the documents, the following facts seem to be an authentic detail.

C H A P.

II.

Athelstan.

924.

IN 934, Athelstan had ravaged Scotland with his army, as far as Dunfoeder, and Wertmore, while his fleet spread dismay to ¹⁵ Caithness.

934.

Westminster, Hoveden, or in Huntingdon. The Annals of these writers, and of Ethelwerd, seem, therefore, to be but Latin translations of Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, some of which are now lost.

¹⁵ Mailros, 147. Sax. Chron. 111. Sim. Dun. 134. The cause of the invasion was Constantine's violation of his treaty. The Scottish king gave up his son as a hostage, with many presents. Sax. Chron. 349.

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Athelstan.
954.

Constantine was then unable to withstand the storm, but he prepared for a day of retaliation. Anlaf also, the son of Sigtryg, though he had obtained a sovereignty in Ireland, was planning to regain his power in Northumbria. In Wales, the princes, humbled by Athelstan¹⁶, were ready to co-operate for the diminution of his strength. The Anglo-Danes (as, for convenience and dispatch, we will hereafter term the descendants of the Northern colonists of Northumbria and East Anglia) beheld with displeasure the preponderance of the Saxon sovereign, and the petty state of Cumbria had no choice but to follow the impulse of the potent neighbours who surrounded it. All these powers confederated¹⁷ against Athelstan, and the united mass of their hostilities was increased by fleets of warriors from Norway and the Baltic.¹⁸ By an attack of this

¹⁶ Florence mentions the prior subjection of Huwal, king of the West-Britons, and Wer, the king of Gwent, in 926, p. 348. Matt. West. names these princes Hunwal, and Wlferth, p. 360.

¹⁷ The members of the confederacy are stated from Ingulf, 29. 37.; Flor. Wig. 349.; Sax. Ch. 111—114.; Hoveden, 422.; and the Egilli-Saga, in Johnstone's *Celto Scandicæ*, p. 31. Florence, Alured Bev. and Hoveden, say, that Constantine incited Anlaf to the attempt.

¹⁸ The British Chronicle in the Cotton library, MS. Cleopatra, b. v. says, "Ac y doeth gwyr Denmarc y geisiaw goresgyn yr ynys y arnaw." 'And the men of Denmark came who sought to conquer the island from him.' It adds, "Ac y rodes ynter kyffranc ydunt ac yny kyffranc hwnnw y llas brenhin yr yscottieit, phymp brenhin o Denmarc."

magnitude, it seemed a certain calculation that the single force of Athelstan must be overthrown. England had never been assailed before with a confederacy of so much power formed with so much skill, and consisting of so many parts.

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II.

Athelstan.

934.

SUCH a combination of hostility could not be completed, and the armaments, necessary for its successful explosion, could not be collected, without Athelstan's knowledge.

HE prepared to meet the storm with firmness and energy; and, to multiply his own means of defence, he circulated promises of high reward to every warrior who should join his ¹⁹standard.

THOROLF and Egil, two of those navigating vikingr whose weapons were ready for any enterprise, heard the tidings as they sailed by Saxony and Flanders. They came in the autumn with three hundred companions, to proffer their

' And he gave them battle, and in this battle were slain the king of Scotland, and five kings of Denmark.' This chronicle ends near the year 1200. The Saxon song mentions Northmanna to have been in the battle. "Thæp ȝeplemeþ peapth Nopthmanna bpeȝu," p. 113. The Annals of Ulster calls the struggle, "a great and destructive war between the Saxons and Normans," p. 67. So Hunt. mentions Froda as ductor Normannus, p. 354. Ingulf mentions Danorum and Norreganorum, 37.

¹⁹ Adalsteinn autem copias sibi contraxit, præbuitque stipendia omnibus, exteris et indigenis, qui hoc pacto rem facere cupiebant. Egilli Skallagrími Saga, p. 31.

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Athelstan.

934.

Anlaf invades.

services to Athelstan, who gladly received ²⁰them. And Rollo assisted him from Normandy.

ANLAF ²¹ commenced the warfare, by entering the Humber with a fleet of 615 ships. ²² The governors, whom Athelstan had left in Northumbria, are named Alfgeirr, and Gudrekr. Their forces were soon overpowered. Gudrekr fell, and Alfgeirr fled to his sovereign with the tidings. ²³ Among the allies of Anlaf, the Northern Saga names Hryngr, and Adils, as British princes. The latter may perhaps have been Edwal, the son of Anarawd, who was reigning in North Wales at this period ²⁴; but it is probable, that Hryngr was a Danish ²⁵leader.

²⁰ Egilli Saga, p. 31, 32. They are called Vikingum in p. 43. On Rollo, see W. Gem. 229. and Dudo.

²¹ In the Egilli Saga, he is called Olafr. In the Annals of Ulster, Olave, p. 67. In the Brut Jeuan Breckfa, Awlaff, p. 485. In Bromton, Aulaf. Other English chronicles call him Anlaf, Anlavus, Analaph, and Onlaf.

²² Mailros, 147. and Sim. Dun. 25. Hoveden, 422. The ship in which Egil afterwards left England, contained one hundred men or more. Egil. Saga, p. 55. If Anlaf's ships were of this size, his army must have been sixty thousand. We may take forty thousand as a safer average.

²³ Egilli Saga, 33, 34.

²⁴ Eidwal Foel acceded in 913, on the death of Anarawd. Brut y Tywys, p. 485. He fell against the Saxons in 941. MS. Cleop. 5.

²⁵ There is an Icelandic fragment which expressly states, that Harald Blaataud, or Blue Tooth, sent his son Hryngr with an army to England; but that Hryngr there, dolo circumventus et occisus est. 1 Langb. 149. Now as the old Icelandic Annals (1 Langb. 187.) place the accession of Harald in 907, and as he was reigning at the time of this

THE Northern account states, that the first array collected by the friends of Athelstan, being unequal to a contest, pretended negotiations, and that fictitious offers of money, were made by the Anglo-Saxons, to gain time till all their army could be assembled.²⁶ When their preparations were complete, Athelstan closed the intercourse by a message to Anlaf²⁷, that he should have permission to withdraw from England unmo-
lest, if he restored his plunder, and would acknowledge himself the subject of the Saxon king.

THE messengers reached Anlaf's camp at night; he arose from his bed, and assembled his earls. The tidings were added, that Athelstan had that day marched into the city a powerful host. The Welsh prince exclaimed, that the negotiations had been mere artifice; and proposed, that he and Hryngr should attempt a night attack on the advanced part of Athelstan's army, commanded by Alfgeirr, and Thorolf.²⁸

ANLAF, brave and active, resolved to inspect the army before he attempted the surprise, that

Visits
Athel-
stan's
camp.

battle, I think it highly probable, that Hryngr, the son of Harald, was the opponent of Athelstan. Langbeck wants to make this son of Harald, the Eric who will be mentioned in the reign of Edred; but that Eric was unquestionably the son of Harald Harfragre.

²⁶ Egilli Saga, 38, 39.

²⁷ The Saga says, Adils, but the meaning seems to imply Anlaf.

²⁸ Egilli Saga, 40. 42.

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934.

the blow might be directed to the most important quarter. He put off his regal vestments, and concealing himself under the disguise of a harper, he went singing through the Saxon army, till he reached the royal tent. His music and dancing gratified Athelstan, till the business of the camp demanded his presence. The minstrel was then dismissed with presents, but his pride revolted against accepting a gift from Athelstan. He took it to avoid detection, but he disdained to keep it, and he buried it in the sand as he left the encampment.

Discovered.

A SOLDIER in the outer stations observed his movements, and knew him in his disguise. He did not betray him; but he hastened with the tidings to Athelstan. To a rebuke for not having seized him, he answered, "O king, the oath which I have lately taken to you, I once gave to Anlaf. If I had broken it to him, I might have been faithless to you; but deign to hear a servant's counsel, and remove your tent to another quarter." Athelstan thought the advice sagacious, and the royal residence was placed in a distant part. The bishop of Sherborne soon afterwards arriving with his soldiers, was lodged in the plain which the king had quitted.²⁹

Night attack.

AT night Adils and Hryngr embodied their forces, and marched on the Saxon camp. The bishop was the victim of the surprise.³⁰ But

²⁹ Malmsb. 48. and 248.

³⁰ Ingulf, 37. Malmsb. 48. 218.

Thorolf and Alfgeirr, who commanded in the district, roused their warriors, and supported the attack. Adils assaulted the division of Alfgeirr, and Hryngr directed himself to the allied vikings.

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
934.

VANQUISHED by the impetuosity of his assailant, Alfgeirr fled from the field, and eventually the country. Adils, flushed with his victory, turned on the others. Thorolf directed his colleague, Egils, to meet him; he exhorted his troops to stand close, and if overpowered to retreat to the wood. Egils obeyed, though with a force inferior.

THE battle became warm. Thorolf fought with all the fury of valour, which was the pride of the day; he threw his shield behind him, and, grasping his huge weapon with both hands³¹, he prostrated the enemies with an irresistible strength. He forced his way at last to the standard of his adversary; he reached and killed him. His success animated his followers, and Adils, mourning the death of Hryngr, gave way, and the combat discontinued.³²

³¹ The sword wielded with both hands, was used by the ancient natives of the Hebrides. They called it the *glaymore*, the great sword. See Boswell's Tour, p. 210. 230. It was a weapon of most barbarous nations.

³² Egil's Saga, 44, 45. I do not give the whole detail of the Saga; I select the circumstances which are most entitled to notice, and which harmonise best with the Saxon descriptions. No two nations describe the same particulars of a battle, although the narration of each is intended to be

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VI.

Athelstan.

934.

The main
battle

ATHELSTAN, hearing of this affair, united, and arranged all his forces for a decisive engagement. Anlaf did the same. A night of rest preceded the awful conflict. Athelstan formed his array of battle. In the front he placed his bravest troops, with Egils at their head. He let Thorolf head his own band, with an addition of Anglo-Saxons, to oppose the irregular Irish, who always flew from point to point; no where steady, yet often injuring the unguarded.³³ The warriors of Mercia and London, who were conducted by the valiant Turketul, the chancellor of the kingdom, he directed to oppose themselves to the national force of Constantine. He chose his own West-Saxons to endure the struggle with Anlaf, his competitor.³⁴ Anlaf observing his disposition, in part imitated it. He obeyed the impulse of his hopes and his courage, and placed himself against Athelstan. One of his wings stretched to the wood against the battalia of Thorolf; it was very numerous, and consisted of the disorderly Irish.³⁵

authentic. A great battle is composed of a multiplicity of incidents. Individuals, in different stations of the field, notice different circumstances. The Saga is minute about the part where Thorolf and Egils fought. The Saxons neglect these warriors, to record their Turketul and Athelstan. This is natural and allowable, perhaps inevitable.

³³ Egil's Saga, 46, 47.

³⁴ Ingulf, 37.

³⁵ Egil's Saga, 47.

BRUNANBURH ³⁶ was the scene of action ; and Thorolf began the battle he loved ; he rushed forward to the wood, hoping to turn the enemy's flank ; his courage was too impetuous and indiscriminate ; his eagerness for the fray impelled him beyond his companions. Both were pressing fiercely and blindly onward, when Adils darted from his ambush in the wood, and destroyed Thorolf and his foremost friends. Egils heard the outcries of alarm ; he looked to that quarter, and saw the banner of Thorolf retreating. Satisfied from this circumstance that Thorolf was not with it, he flew to the spot, encouraged his party, and renewed the battle. Adils fell in the struggle. ³⁷

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

934.

at Brunan-
burh.

AT this crisis, while the conflict was raging with all the obstinacy of determined patriotism and courageous ambition ; when missile weapons had been mutually abandoned ; when foot was planted against foot, shield forced against shield, and manual vigour was exerted with every energy

³⁶ It is singular that the position of this famous battle is not ascertained. The Saxon song says, it was at Brunanburh ; Ethelwerd, a contemporary, names the place Brunandune ; Simeon of Durham, Weondune or Ethrunnanwerch, or Brunnan byrge ; Malmsbury, Brunsford ; Ingulf says, Brunford in Northumbria. These, of course, imply the same place : but where was it ? Camden thought it was at Ford, near Bromeridge, in Northumberland. Gibson mentions, that in Cheshire there is a place called Brunburh. I observe that the Villare mentions a Brunton in Northumberland.

³⁷ Egil's Saga, 48, 49.

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Athelstan.
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of destruction; when chiefs and vassals were perishing in the all-levelling confusion of ³⁸ war, and the numbers cut down were fiercely supplied with new crowds of warriors hastening to become victims, the chancellor Turketul made an attack which influenced the fortune of the day. He selected from the combatants some citizens of London, on whose veteran valour he could rely: to these he added the men of Worcestershire, and their leader, who is called the magnanimous Singin. He formed those chosen troops into a firm and compact body, and placing his vast muscular figure at their head, he chose a peculiar quarter of attack, and rushed impetuously on his prey.

THE hostile ranks fell before him. He pierced the circle of the Picts and the Orkney men, and, heedless of the wood of arrows and spears which fastened in his armour, he even penetrated to the Cumbrians and the Scots. He beheld Constantine the king of the Grampian hills, and he pressed forward to assail him. Constantine was too brave to decline his daring adversary. The assault fell first upon his son, who was unhorsed; with renovated fury the battle then began to rage. Every heart beat vehement; every arm was impatient to rescue or to take the prince. The Scots, with noble loyalty, precipitated them-

³⁸ Cessantibus cito ferentariis armis, pede pes, et cuspidē cuspis umbo quē umbone pellebatur. Cæsi multi mortales, confusa quē cadavera regum et pauperum corruebant. Ingulf, 37.

selves on the Saxons, to preserve their leader. Turketul would not forego the expected prize. Such, however, was the fury of his assailants; so many weapons surrounded the Saxon chancellor, that his life began to be endangered, and he repented of his daring. He was nearly oppressed; the prince was just released; when Singin, with a desperate blow, terminated the contested life. New courage rushed into the bosoms of the Saxons on this event. Grief and panic as suddenly overwhelmed their enemies. The Scots in consternation withdrew, and Turketul triumphed in his hard-earned victory.³⁹

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
934.

ATHELSTAN and his brother Edmund⁴⁰, were, during these events, engaged with Anlaf. In the hottest season of the conflict, the sword of Athelstan broke at the handle, while his enemies were pressing fiercely upon him. He was speedily supplied with another⁴¹, and the conflict continued to be balanced.

³⁹ Ingulf, 37. Malmesbury and Ingulf, and the Welsh Chronicle, Cleop. A. 5. (*ý llas brenhin yr yscottieit*) assert, that Constantine fell; but I think the Saxon poem a better, because a contemporary evidence, that it was his son that perished. This says of Constantine, *7 his sunu foplet on pæl stole, punbum fopgunden geonge æt zuche*, p. 113. The Scottish history confirms the escape of Constantine.

⁴⁰ The Saxon song attests the presence of Edmund in the battle, p. 112.

⁴¹ This incident was thought of consequence enough to be dignified by a miracle, which the prayers of Odo produced. See his life by Osberne; and see Bromton, p. 839. 863.

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AFTER the battle had long raged, Egils and Turketul, pursuing the retreating Scots, charged suddenly upon Anlaf's rear. It was then that his determined bands began to be shaken ⁴²; slaughter thinned their ranks; many fled, and the assailants cried out "Victory." Athelstan exhorted his men to profit by the auspicious moment. He commanded his banner to be carried into the midst of the enemy. He made a deep impression on their front, and a general ruin followed. The soldiers of Anlaf fled on every side, and the death of pursuit filled the plain with their bodies. ⁴³

THUS terminated this dangerous and important conflict. Its successful issue was of such consequence, that it raised Athelstan to a most venerated dignity in the eyes of all Europe. The kings of the continent sought his ⁴⁴ friendship, and England began to assume a majestic port amid the other nations of the West. Among the Anglo-Saxons it excited such rejoicings, that not only their poets aspired to commemorate it, but the songs were so popular, that one

⁴² Egilli Saga, 49.

⁴³ Egilli Saga, 50. Ingulf, 37.

⁴⁴ *Hac itaque victoria per universam Christianitatem citius ventilata, desiderabant omnes reges terræ cum Athelstano rege amicitias facere et quocumque modo sacra fœdera pacis inire.* Ingulf, 37. Ethelwerd, who ends his chronicle with Eadgar, says, that, to his day, it was popularly called the great battle, p. 848.

of them is inserted in the Saxon Chronicle, as the best memorial of the event.⁴⁵

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
934.

It celebrates both Athelstan and Edmund, the nobles, and the valour of the West Saxons and Mercians; it states the battle to have lasted from sun-rise to sun-set; it mentions the death of five kings; the flight of Anlaf, and the fall of seven of his earls; the flight of Froda; the retreat of Constantine, and the death of his son: it concludes with declaring, that the books of the old writers had never mentioned a greater slaughter in this island "since the Angles and the Saxons hither came from the East over the broad ocean, and sought Britain; when the illustrious war-smiths overcame the Welsh; when the earls, excelling in honour, obtained the country."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Sax. Chron. p. 112—114. The song is also in the two MSS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4., with frequent variations in orthography from the printed copy. The MS. B. 1. puts it to the year 937; and, among other readings, instead of 7 heopa land, p. 113. l. 30., has eft Ypalanð. So the MS. B. 4., instead of bopð-peal, p. 112. l. 12., has heopð peal: for eal-gobon, afterwards, zeal-goben, and many similar differences, which are worth collating, because in some instances, as in Ypalanð and heopð peal, they improve the sense. Langbeck has published it, with notes, and with three versions, v. 2. p. 412. Henry of Huntingdon has inserted an ancient Latin version of it in his history, p. 354. Malmsbury has preserved a portion of another poem, written also on this occasion, p. 51, 52.

⁴⁶ Sax. Chron. 114. The ancient supplement to Snorre, Sturleson says, "Angli hoc prælium unum censuerunt inter

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Athelstan.

954.

Athelstan
first mo-
narch of
England.

NORTHUMBRIA and Wales⁴⁷ fell into the power of Athelstan, by this victory. It effectually secured to him the throne of his ancestors; and the subjugation of the Anglo-Danes was so decisive, that he has received the fame of being the founder of the English monarchy.

THE claims of Egbert to this honour are unquestionably surreptitious. The competition can only be between Alfred and Athelstan. Our old chronicles vary on this subject: some denominate Alfred the first monarcha⁴⁸; some

maxima et acerrima quæ unquam cum Normannis aut Danis commiserunt." 2 Langb. 419.

⁴⁷ Ac ef a ýstýngawd ýdaw holl brenhined Kymre ac aberys ydunt talu teyrnget ydaw megýs ý talawd brenhin Nortwei ýdaw. Sef oed hýnný trý chant punt o areant ac ngaent punt o cun a phymp mil gwarthec pob blwýdýn. MS. of British History, Cleop. B. 5. "And he became possessed of all the kingdom of Wales, and it was made to pay a tribute to him like the payment of the king of Norway to him. This was 300 pounds of silver, and 100 pounds of wool, and 5000 cows every year." Caradoc gives this tribute somewhat different. He says, "20 pounds in gold, 300 in silver, and 200 head of cattle." Wynne, 48.

⁴⁸ Matt. West. 340. So the Chronicon de regibus Angliæ a Petro de Ickham. MS. Cotton. Lib. Domit. A. 3. *Primus regum Anglorum super totam Angliam solus regnare cœpit.* So the Chronicon Johannis de Taxton, ab initio mundi ad Ed. I. MS. Cotton, Julius, A. 1. *Alfredus exinde regnum Anglorum solus omnium regem obtinuit.* So Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes monachi S. Benedicti de Hulmo ab adventu Saxonum ad A. D. 1293. MS. Cotton, Nero, D. 2. *ad regem Aluredum primum monarcham totius Angliæ.*—So a MS. in the same volume, p. 243. *Aluredus rex qui*

give it to Athelstan.⁴⁹ The truth seems to be, that Alfred was the first monarch of the Anglo-Saxons, but Athelstan was the first monarch of England. The Danish sovereigns, to whose colonies Alfred chose or was compelled to yield Northumbria and East Anglia, divided the island with him; therefore, though he first reigned monarch over the Anglo-Saxons, from the utter destruction of the octarchy, it was not until Athelstan completely subjugated the Anglo-Danish power, that the monarchy of England arose. After the battle of Brunanburh, Athelstan had no competitor: he was the immediate sovereign of all England. He was even nominal lord of Wales and Scotland.

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II.
Athelstan.
934.

THE fame of Athelstan extended beyond the

primus totum regnum Angliæ possedit.—So the *Chronicon Roffense*, ib. p. 79. *Iste Alfredus primus monarcha fuit regni Angliæ; and many others.*

⁴⁹ Edgar, in one of his charters, says of Athelstan, “*Qui primus regum Anglorum omnes nationes qui Britanniam incolunt sibi armissubegit,*” 1 Dugdale, *Monast.* 140.; and see *Alured. Beverl.* 110.; *Sim. Dunelm*, p. 18. and 24.; and *Stubb’s Acta Pont. Ebor.* 1698. So the *Compendium Hist. de Regibus*, Anglo-Saxon MS. Cott. Domit. A. 8. p. 5. *Athelstanus qui primus regum ex Anglis totius Britanniae monarchiam habuit.* So the *Chronica of Tewksbury*, MS. Cleop. C. 3., and cited in Dugdale’s *Monasticon*, vol. i. p. 154. has, “*Adelstani regis qui primus monarcha fuit.*” So the *Historia Ramesiensis*, 3 Gall. 387., calls him *Æthelstani totius olim Angliæ Basilei.* Hermannus, who wrote 1070, says, *Ædelstanus regnat Angliam que diu partitam solus sibi subjugat.* MS. Tib. B. 2. p. 22.

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934.

island he governed. His accomplishments, his talents, and his successes, interested Europe in his favour, and he received many proofs of the respect with which foreigners regarded him. He had connections with Bretagne, France, Germany, Norway, and Normandy; and from this period England began to lose its insular seclusion, and to be concerned with the current transactions of Europe.

His connections
with Bre-
tagne;

WHEN the Northmen, who had settled in Normandy, overran Bretagne, the sovereign, Mathuedoi, escaped to England with his family. The Breton lords followed; and all who preferred honourable poverty to the loss of liberty, swelled the emigration. Athelstan received the wretched exiles, who came to him under the same circumstances as those in which their ancestors had fled to Bretagne, with that humanity which ennobles the benefactor.

THE young Alan, the son of Mathuedoi, by the daughter of the celebrated Alain, he took into his palace, and was the sponsor at his baptism. Nourished and educated by Athelstan's liberality, the young Alan grew up to manhood with ability and honour. He beheld indignantly the sufferings of his country; he projected a day of retribution. As soon as his age would permit, he assembled the surviving Bretons who had emigrated, and directed his course to the shores of Bretagne. He surprised Dol and St. Brieux. His appearance and first

successes revived both patriotism and hope ; he was numerously joined ; he drove the Northmen from his country and from the Loire, and received the sceptre of Bretagne as his well-merited reward.⁵⁰

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
934.

WHEN Charles the Simple, the king of France, was imprisoned and dethroned, his queen, Edgiva, fled into England to her father Edward the Elder, carrying over her son Louis, but three years old.⁵¹

and with
France.

THE queen and her son continued the guests of Athelstan, who treated his unfortunate sister with affection and respect.

RODOLF, a Frankish noble, who had assumed the throne of Charles, governed France, full of seditions, revolts, and hostilities, with those talents which give celebrity to their possessor, and happiness to the people.⁵² In 926, an inter-

⁵⁰ *Chronicon Namnetense restitutum*, in the appendix to Lobineau, vol. ii. p. 45.; and in Bouquet, vol. viii. p. 276.; and Flodoard *Chron.* ib. Such was the desolation which had attended the Northman invasion, that the *civitas Namnetica sine ullo habitatore vacua et omnino longo tempore deserta remansit.* Ib. Of Alanus, the *Chronicon* says, "fuit vir potens ac valde adversus inimicos suos belligerator fortis habens et possidens omnem Britanniam, fugatis inde Normannis sibi subditam et Redonicam et Namneticum et etiam trans Ligerim Medalgicum, Theofalgicum et Herbadillicum." 8 Bouquet. 276.

⁵¹ Daniel, 236.

⁵² His successful wars, the humiliation of the vassals of the crown, thirteen years' possession of an usurped throne, and la France pacifiée malgré tant d'esprits inquiets, sont

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Athelstan.
926.

course was opened with Athelstan by Hugues the son of Robert, whose dignity had been so fleeting. Hugues requested of Athelstan, his sister, Ethilda, in marriage. This was a very delicate negotiation. Hugues had co-operated with the other chiefs, that had dethroned and still kept imprisoned the king, who had married the sister of the lady he wooed. This sister was with Athelstan, with her infant child. Hugues, however, persevered in his suit, and conducted it with dexterity. He obtained for his ambassador, Adulf, the son of the count of Flanders, and of Alfred's daughter, the aunt of Athelstan.⁵³ The affinity of Adulf must have given interest to his negotiation. Splendid presents enforced the request; perfumes never seen in England before; emeralds of fascinating verdure; many fine coursers with rich caparisons; a vase of onyx, so beautifully carved, that the corn, vines, and men seemed animated, and so polished, that it reflected like a mirror; the sword of Constantine the Great; the conquering lance of Charlemagne; a diadem of gold and gems, so radiant as to dazzle; and some

des preuves tres certaines de sa prudence, de son courage, de sa fermeté et de ce genie superieur qui fait les grands hommes et les heros. Daniel, 250.

⁵³ Malmsbury, 51. The British Chronicle, Cleop. B. 5., mentions this: "Ac y daeth Edulf iarll Boloyn ap Baudewine iarll Flandrys ac aurec gan Huges."

venerated relicks, composed the splendid ⁵⁴ gift. CHAP.
 Policy, perhaps, taught the importance, even II.
 to the dethroned Charles, or to his family, of Athelstan.
 making Hugues a friend. His wishes were
 therefore gratified, and he became the brother-
 in-law of Athelstan. ⁵⁵

WHEN Rodolf died without male issue, the
 competition for the crown was renewed between
 Hugues and Vermandois. Their factions were
 too equally balanced to admit either to reign.
 Some persons, remembering the family of
 Charles, proposed the election of his son.
 Hugues, despairing of his own elevation, in-
 clined to this idea. Athelstan, understanding
 the circumstances, exerted himself in behalf of
 Louis, the young prince, who was still at his
 court. He sent an embassy to the duke of Nor-
 mandy ⁵⁶, to engage his influence with the
 Frankish lords, who at last resolved to send to
 England to offer the crown to Louis. ⁵⁷

936.

THE deputies, one of whom was the arch-

Louis quits
 England.

⁵⁴ The presents are enumerated by Malmsbury, p. 51., who says, "Equos plurimos." The British Chronicle specifies, but with apparent amplification, 'Try chant emmys ac eu gwisgoed,' "three hundred coursers with their trappings." MSS. Cleop. B. 5.

⁵⁵ Athelstan returned the courtesy with non minoribus beneficiis, in addition to the lady. Malmsb. 51.

⁵⁶ Dudo de Act. Norman. lib. iii. p. 97.

⁵⁷ Hugo comes trans mare mittit pro accersendo Ludovico Caroli filio quem rex Alstannus avunculus ipsius nutriebat. Flodoardi Hist. Eccles. Rhem. lib. iv. c. 26.

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VI.
Athelstan.
936.

bishop of Sens, reached England in 936, and supplicated Athelstan, on the part of the states of France, to permit their chosen king to join them. Athelstan had the glory of receiving this address, and of expressing, in return, his joy at the event, and his anxiety for the safety of the young prince. The French ambassadors plighted their oaths, and saluted him king. Athelstan allowed him to depart a few days afterwards, and sent many Anglo-Saxon bishops and lords to accompany him in honour. Hugues and the nobles of France received him at Boulogne, and he was crowned at Laon.⁵⁸

Louis al-
lies with
Athelstan.

THE reign of Louis was not attended with the friendship of Hugues. Differences, in time, arose, and Hugues increased his consequence by marrying Hadwida, the daughter of Henry the First, emperor of Germany.⁵⁹ Louis, to collect a power capable of securing himself against the aspiring nobles, procured the alliance of Athelstan, who promised to send a fleet to his succour. "This is the first example," says a modern French historian, "which we have in our history, not only of an offensive

⁵⁸ Flodoardi, *ibid.* Louis, from his residence in England, was surnamed Transmarinus, or Outremer.

⁵⁹ Chronicon Flodoardi, 8 Bouquet, 184. By her he had Hugh Capet, who completed the deposition of the family of Charlemagne, which his ancestors had begun, and whose dynasty that seemed violently terminated in our days, has been since restored.

league between France and England, but it is also the first treaty by which these two kingdoms concerned themselves about each others welfare. Until this event, the two nations had considered themselves as two worlds, which had no connection but that of commerce to maintain, and had no interest to cultivate either friendship or enmity in other concerns.⁶⁰

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
936.

ATHELSTAN performed his engagements. When Otho passed the Rhine, in 939, Louis claimed of England the stipulated aid. The Anglo-Saxon fleet sailed immediately for his support. It appeared off the coast of Flanders, and protected the maritime cities: it ravaged some territories of the enemy, but returned to England without having had the opportunity of any important achievement.⁶¹

939.
Athelstan
aids Louis
with a
fleet.

So much was Athelstan considered abroad, that Arnulf, the count of Flanders, having taken the fortress of the count Herluin, in 939, sent his captive wife and children to Athelstan.⁶²

THE emperor of Germany, Henry the First, permitted his son, Otho, afterwards surnamed the Great, to solicit a sister of Athelstan in marriage.

His con-
nection
with the
Emperor
Henry I.

In 919, the dignity of emperor was conferred on the prince nominated by Conrad, who has

919.

⁶⁰ Daniel, p. 256.

⁶¹ Chronicon Flodoardi. 8 Bouquet, 193.

⁶² Ibid. 192.

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VI.

Athelstan.

919.

become illustriously known to posterity under the title of Henry the First, or the Fowler.

THE wars of Henry with the barbarous nations of Hungary, with the Danes, Bavarians, Suabians, Bohemians, Vandals, Dalmatians, and Franks, by their successful issue, produced to him a high reputation, and gave new dignity and power to the imperial crown; but his mind soared above the praise of a barbarous conqueror. Such characters have a thousand rivals. The catalogue of men, whose successful courage or tactical management has decided fields of battle in their favour, is as extensive as time itself. Wars have every where deformed the world, and conquerors may of course every where be found. It is for those who display a cultured intellect and useful virtues; whose lives have added something to the stock of human happiness; and whose characters therefore present to us the visions of true greatness, that history must reserve its frugal panegyrics: Henry the Fowler was one of these most fortunate personages. He found his German subjects wedded to their barbarism by their agricultural and pastoral habits; and while he provided for their safety he laboured to improve both their morals and their mind.⁶³

⁶³ Conrad seems to have foreseen this disposition in Henry, for it is his reason for selecting the Saxon duke: "Sunt nobis, frater, copiae exercitus congregandi atque ducendi, sunt urbes et arma cum regalibus insigniis et omne quod

He determined, for this purpose, to draw the population of Germany from their rude, unsocial, and exposed villages, into towns⁶⁴; into those happy approximations of society which present a barrier to the sword of war, which are the nurseries of the middle orders of men, which tame the ferocities of the human passions, give dominion to moral sympathy, communicate cultivation and knowledge by perpetual contagion, and cause the virtues to blossom amid general emulation, by daily lessons of their necessity, their diffusion, and their fame. These towns he fortified with skilful labour.⁶⁵

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
919.

To effect his purpose, he commanded, that of the men in the villages who bore arms, a ninth should be placed in towns, for whose benefit the rest should cultivate the labours of husbandry. The townsmen were to receive a third of the collected harvest; and, in return,

decus regium deposcit, præter fortunam atque mores. Fortuna, frater, cum nobillissimis moribus, Henrico cedit. Wit-tichind, p. 10.

⁶⁴ "Before this period, excepting the castles on the mountains, the seats of the nobility and convents, which happened to be surrounded with walls, there were only lonely farms and villages." Pütter's Historical Development, vol. i. p. 114.

⁶⁵ "In this respect Germany has undergone but little alteration. Most of the ancient cities, and even inconsiderable towns, are surrounded with walls, towers, &c., which give them a singular and dismal appearance." Pütter, ed. note, p. 115.

BOOK
VI.
Athelstan.

919.

they built barns and habitations, within the city, for the peasants. When war summoned, the burghers hastened to the defence of their country. By this institution the ravages of enemies never introduced famine, because the granaries in the cities were an ultimate supply, and warriors were always ready to fly to the field when exigency called.⁶⁶

932.

To induce the people to make towns their voluntary residence, he forbade suburbs; and ordered that the country habitations should be few and mean. He ordered all solemn meetings, the festivities of marriage, and the traffic of merchandize, to be held in towns; he directed the citizens to improve themselves by useful industry, and, in peace, to learn those arts which they might practise to their benefit.⁶⁷

By his regulations, by his personal diligence, and by their own beneficial experience, the Germans gradually laid aside their aversion to live in towns, and these important seminaries of human improvement perpetually increased.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See the Instituta of Henry apud Goldastum, sub anno 924. I find them cited in the *Aquila Saxonica*, p. 24. ed. Venet. 1673. Wittichind mentions them briefly, p. 13.

⁶⁷ Instituta Henrici in *Aquila Sax.* p. 24. The latter precept is enforced by a moral observation: "Disciplina enim et labor magnum ad virtutem afferunt momentum." *Ib.*

⁶⁸ Soest, in Westphalia, is probably one of the first cities founded by Henry. Next to this town, the most ancient are supposed to be Quedlinburg, Nordhausen, Duderstadt, Merseberg, &c. Pütter, note 117.

HENRY, during his life, extended his communications to England; and, in 932, by his permission, Otho sought a wife from the sisters of Athelstan.

C H A P.

II.
Athelstan.

932.

Otho mar-
ries Athel-
stan's sis-
ter.

EDITHA was residing in her brother Athelstan's court, when the ambassadors of Henry arrived, to request her for his son. Athelstan received them benignly, his sister⁶⁹ assented, and a magnificent attendance, which his chancellor, Turketul, headed⁷⁰, conducted her to her royal lover. Her sister Adiva went with her, that Otho might be more honoured, and might take his choice.⁷¹ Editha was preferred by the too highly honoured Otho, and her sister was married to a prince near the Alps, who was one of the emperor's court.⁷²

ATHELSTAN'S transactions with Norway were also interesting.

Athel-
stan's
transac-
tions with
Norway.

IN the reign of Edward, and at the accession of Athelstan, Harald Harfragre was reigning the monarch of Norway. He had subdued all the little kings, who had divided it into many small states, and his victories had never been reversed.

HARALD, though a barbarian, was not merely

⁶⁹ Hrosvida. Poem de gestis Oddonis, p. 165. She calls our island, *terram sat deliciosam*.

⁷⁰ Ingulf, p. 38.

⁷¹ Hrosvida, p. 165.

⁷² Ethelwerd's preface. Ingulf, 38., and Malmsb. 47. Hrosvida mourns the death of Editha with great expressions of sorrow, p. 171.

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VI.
Athelstan.

the brutal soldier. The spirit of improvement, which at this period influenced an Alfred and a Henry, seems to have been communicated to him. He also aspired to legislate as well as to conquer.⁷³ He endeavoured to civilise the countries he subdued.

THE wars of Harald, though inevitably productive of much individual misery, have the great excuse, that defence first compelled him into the martial field.⁷⁴ In a general view, his conquests had a beneficial effect. They dispersed several portions of the Norwegian population into countries then uninhabited. Thus Iceland⁷⁵, the Orkneys⁷⁶, the Shetland, and the Feroe islands⁷⁷, date their inhabitation in his reign, as well as Jamtia and Helsingia, provinces of Sweden.⁷⁸ But his principal merit

⁷³ Snorre has preserved some of the laws of Harald, in his *Haralld's Saga*, c. vi. p. 79.

⁷⁴ *Post obitum Halfdani Nigri regnum ab eo relictum invasere principum multi.* Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, c. i. p. 75. He details the invasions, their issue, and Harald's retaliations.

⁷⁵ *Islandia inhabitatur primum a Norwegis diebus Haraldi Harfager.* Ara Frode, c. i. p. 6. *Eo tempore erat Islandia sylvis concreta,* c. ii. p. 10. The Norwegian emigrants found some Christians in it, who went away on their arrival, leaving some Irish books behind. *Ib.* Ara Frode was born 1060. Snorre says, he was the first of all who wrote *hac in regione sermone Norwegico tam prisca quam recentioris ævi monumenta.* Preface, p. 3.

⁷⁶ *Orkneyinga Saga*, p. 3. ed. Hafniæ, 1780.

⁷⁷ Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, c. 20. p. 96.

⁷⁸ Snorre, *ib.*

was his prohibition of piracy, and the termination of much of the bloodshed of the North, by conquering all the petty princes, and establishing a monarchy in Norway. C H A P.
II.
Athelstan.

THE piracy of the North was a very active agent in perpetuating that barbarism and ferocity of which it was also the consequence. Like our modern slave traffic, wherever it came it desolated; and while it reigned, it kept down the human capacity in the bondage of the most destructive warfare, penury, and blood.

THAT hour was therefore auspicious to man when the abolition of the petty kingships, the aggregation of dominion, and the rise of monarchies, created at once both the power and the desire to suppress these pirates. When Harald had stretched his sceptre over all Norway, every aggression of piracy was an attack on some of his subjects; and as he raised a contribution from their labours⁷⁹, every act of plunder upon them was a diminution of his revenues.

HARALD therefore published an edict, prohibiting piratical excursions on any part of his dominions.⁸⁰ He enforced his law by a vin-

⁷⁹ It was one of his laws that *Regi que census fundi solverent coloni omnes, ditiores æque ac pauperes*. Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, p. 80. He deputed to his Iarls, whom he placed over every fylki, the power of collecting the taxation, of which they received a third to support their rank and expenditure. *Ib*.

⁸⁰ *Haralld's Saga*, c. 24. p. 100.

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VI.
Athelstan.

dictive pursuit of the race he discountenanced. He prepared armaments; they fled; he chased them from his own dominions; he followed them to Shetland, to the Orkneys, and to the Hebrides; he overtook and destroyed ⁸¹ them. These exertions drove Rollo or Hrolfr from his dominions, and occasioned the Northman colonisation of Normandy.

THE life of Harald stretched into the reign of Athelstan. It is said, that Athelstan had, in his youth, visited Denmark.⁸² It is, however, certain, that when the Anglo-Saxon was on his throne, an intercourse, which announced high friendship, commenced between the two sovereigns. Harald sent to Athelstan his son Haco, to be educated, and to learn the customs of the English nation.⁸³ The Anglo-Saxons were so much higher in the scale of civilisation than the Norwegians, who were but just emerging into visible humanity, that we may easily conceive that Haco was sent to Athelstan for his personal improvement, as in our days, Peter the Great, for the same purpose, travelled Eu-

⁸¹ Snorre, p. 98.

⁸² It is Wallingford who affirms this, in his *Chronica*, though from what more ancient authority I know not: "Descenderat enim aliquando in tempore patris sui ad Gytrum in Daciam, p. 540.

⁸³ Theodoric, one of the most ancient historians of Norway, so informs us: "Haraldus miserat unum ex filiis suis Halstano regi Anglorum Hocon nomine ut nutriretur et disceret morem gentis." *Hist. Norw.* c. ii. p. 7.

rope. This simple explanation may be allowed to displace the narration of Snorre, which, on this subject, resembles more a chapter in the Edda than an historical chronicle. He talks of Athelstan sending ambassadors to present Harald with a sword, that when the Norwegians handled it, they might exclaim, "You are now his thane, because you have taken his sword." To return the polite joke, Harald is stated to have sent his officer to England with his son. The officer placed the child on the knee of Athelstan, and said, "Harald commands you to nourish his illegitimate child."⁸⁴

C H A P.

II.

Athelstan.

THE simple expressions of Theodoric, "ut disceret morem gentis," discountenance these idle fables—the children of ignorant rumour. That Athelstan caused his ward to be taught every becoming accomplishment, that he loved him, and that Haco excelled in his studies and exercises, are circumstances not repugnant to our belief. Harald sent to Athelstan the present of a magnificent ship, with a golden beak and purple sails, surrounded with shields, internally gilt.⁸⁵ Haco received from Athelstan a sword, which he kept to his death.⁸⁶

HARALD had several wives, and a numerous progeny.⁸⁷ When his death approached, he

⁸⁴ Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, c. xli. xlii. p. 119, 120.

⁸⁵ *Malmsbury*, 51.

⁸⁶ Snorre, c. xliii. p. 121.

⁸⁷ They are enumerated by Snorre, p. 97.

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selected his son Eric to be his successor. He divided some portions of his dominions among his other children.⁸⁸ Their ambition was dissatisfied, and enmities and contests succeeded. Eric, like a crowd of others, saw no crime in actions which secured his greatness, and therefore earned the horrible surname of the slayer of his brothers.⁸⁹ The Norwegian people had more morality than their sovereign, and invited Haco to release them from such a ⁹⁰monster. Athelstan provided his pupil with an equipped fleet and warriors; and with these Haco sailed to Tronheim.⁹¹ Haco's countenance was beautiful, his person robust, his mind disciplined, his manners popular.⁹² He was received with joy. The chiefs and people deserted Eric, and Haco was chosen king in his ⁹³stead. His conduct and laws displayed the benefit he

⁸⁸ Snorre, p. 112, 113.

⁸⁹ Theodoric, c. ii. p. 7. Snorre, in the last chapter of his Haralld's Saga, p. 123., states his fatal warfare against two of his brethren.

⁹⁰ Theodoric, c. ii. p. 7.

⁹¹ Snorre's Saga Hakonar Goda, c. i. p. 125. *Itineri in Norvegiam hinc mox accingitur, ad quod et copiis et classe bene armata, omnibus que rebus, necessariis, ope Adalsteini regis magnifice instruitur.*

⁹² Theodoric, c. iv. p. 9.

⁹³ Snorre, Hakonar Goda, c. i.; and Theodoric, c. 2. His reign occupies the Saga of Snorre, called Saga Hakonar Goda, p. 125—164. The agriculture and trade of his subjects particularly prospered in the tranquillity of his reign. His modesty, benignity, prudence, and legislative wisdom are extolled, 135.; yet Ad. Bren. calls him "cruel," p. 25.

had received from the superior civilisation of the court of Athelstan. He was rewarded for a virtuous reign, by a permanent and invaluable epithet. Though ten centuries divide him from us, his title still survives — “Haco the Good.”

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.

THUS it became the glory of Athelstan, that he nurtured and enthroned three kings in Europe. He educated and established Alan of Bretagne, Louis of France, and Haco of Norway; and these actions are not recorded by English writers⁹⁴, but are attested by the chronicles of the countries benefited by his liberality. Our own authors, by omitting these circumstances, have concealed part of his fame; but this moderation entitles them to credit in other similar events. We may therefore believe, on their evidence, that he returned to Howel the kingdom of Wales, and to Constantine the kingdom of Scotland, declaring that he would rather bestow kingdoms than enjoy them.⁹⁵ He

⁹⁴ For this reason they have been hitherto neglected by our historians. When we recollect the benefits which Athelstan produced to other sovereigns, and the numerous embassies to himself, we must feel that it is not with rhetorical praise that the abbot of Peterborough says, “*Rex Adalsteinus omnium ore laudatur; felicem se credebat quisquis regum exterorum ei affinitate vel fœdere sociari posset.*” Chron. Petri de Burgo, p. 25.

⁹⁵ Malmsbury, lib. ii. c. 6. p. 48., says, “*Quos—miseratione infractus in antiquum statum sub se regnatos constituit, gloriosius esse pronuncians regem facere quam regem esse.*” Hume, with more national feeling than we should have suspected from his philosophy, disbelieves the fact of

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gave another proof of his magnanimity in this respect, in his reception of Eric, whom, at the call of Norway and of humanity, he had assisted to dethrone. When Eric abandoned the sceptre of Norway, he went to the Orkneys, and, having collected a great army, he plundered along Scotland. Athelstan heard of his vicinity, and sent a message to him, that his father and himself had been united in bonds of the strictest friendship, and that he wished to show his esteem for Harald in kindnesses to his son.⁹⁶

ERIC gladly accepted his favours, and Athelstan placed him in Northumbria, to reign in feudal subordination to himself.⁹⁷ Eric was baptized, and fixed his habitation at ⁹⁸ York. Eric is drawn by Snorre as a tall, active, powerful man; formidable and usually successful in war; fierce, precipitate, selfish, and ⁹⁹ silent. His wife Gunnhilda, has obtained a niche in the

Constantine, because his countrymen deny it, p. 105.; as if they were less interested to disavow, than the Saxons to affirm it.

⁹⁶ Snorre, Hakonar Goda, c. iii.

⁹⁷ Saga Hakonar, c. iii. Theodoric says, "Ipse vero Ericus ad Angliam navigavit et a rege honorifice susceptus ibidem diem obiit, c. ii. p. 7.

⁹⁸ Snorre says at Iorvik (York) "Ubi sedem olim habuisse feruntur Lodbroki filii." Saga Hakonar, c. 3. p. 128. He adds, "Northumbria autem maximam partem erat a Nordmannis habitata. Linguae Norvegicæ nomina plurima ejus regionis ferunt loca, Grimbær utpote, Hauksfiot aliaque multa." Ib.

⁹⁹ Haralld's Saga, c. xlv. p. 124.

uncouth temple of Norwegian history. She was uncommonly beautiful, very intelligent, and engaging; but Nature had placed her among barbarians; and her talents only augmented her power of mischief. She became notorious for her cruelty and deceit.¹⁰⁰

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.

ATHELSTAN maintained a friendship with Rollo of Normandy, and improved Exeter, which he separated from the British kingdom of Cornwall.

ATHELSTAN is represented to have been a great benefactor to the monastic institutions. He rebuilt many; he was liberal to most, of books, ornaments, or endowments.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Haralld's Saga, ib. She is often mentioned in the Norwegian history, at this period. She poisoned her husband's brother, Halfdan. Haralld's Saga, p. 122.

¹⁰¹ Malmsb. 48. There are two curious MSS. in the Cotton Library, which were presents of Athelstan. One, Tiberius, A. 2. is a MS. of the Latin Gospels. Before them is a page of Latin in Saxon characters, of which the first part is, "Volumen hoc evangelii Æthelstan Anglorum basyleos et curagulus totius Britanniae devota mente Dorobernensis cathedræ primatui tribuit." One page is occupied by the letters LIB, in large gilt capitals, and by the rest of the first verse, in small gilt capitals, on a lilac ground. The following verses, containing the genealogy, are in gilt capitals, on dark blue ground. The first verses of the three other Gospels are in gilt capitals, on the uncoloured parchment. To each a painting of the evangelist is prefixed. The rest is written in ink, without abbreviations. In the beginning of the Gospels is a page with, "Incipit evangelium secundum Mattheum," in large gilt capitals. Below these words are two crosses; opposite to one is, ODDA REX, and to the other, MIHTHILD MATER REGIS. I am

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VI.

Athelstan.

Athel-
stan's
books.

ATHELSTAN had received, by his father's care, a lettered education.¹⁰² His subsequent cultivation of knowledge has not been transmitted to us; but there is a little catalogue of his

particular in describing the book, because it is declared to have been used for the coronation oath of our Anglo-Saxon kings, and because, from the names of Odda and Mihthild, I would venture to conjecture, that it was a present from Otho of Germany, who married Athelstan's sister, and from Mathilda, the empress of Henry, and mother of Otho. Hrosvida, his contemporary, spells Otho's name Oddo. Reub. 164. There is also in the Cotton Library a MS. Claudius, B. 5. which contains the proceedings of the sixth synod of Constantinople, in the seventh century. The first page of this contains part of the title in very large capitals, partly red. The next page has the rest of the title in smaller capitals, and below these, in Saxon characters, are these words: "Hunc codicem Æthelstanus rex tradidit Deo et almæ Christi genitrici Sanctisque Petro et Benedicto in Bathoniæ civitatis cœnobio ob remunerationem suæ animæ et quisquis hos legerit characteres omnipotenti pro eo proque suis amicis fundat preces." At the end of the MS. is a paragraph, stating, that it was written in the time of pope Sergius. A marginal note is inserted by Sir Robert Cotton, stating, that as Sergius was pope in 690, and the synod was held in 681, the book must have been written in the tenth year after the synod. In the same valuable library, Galba, A. 18. is a small sized MS. which has come down to us as the Psalter used by Athelstan. In the beginning is a very ancient calendar in Saxon letters, written in 703, ut apparet in codice. The rest is composed of prayers, the Latin Psalter, and several other hymns, very handsomely written. Every psalm is begun with gilt capitals, with a title preceding in red letters. It has several ornamental paintings. In the British Museum, among the MSS. of the Bibliotheca Regis, I. A. 18. is a MS. of the Gospels in Latin, with this remark, "Hunc codicem Æthelstan Rex devota mente Doroberniæ tribuit ecclesio."

¹⁰² Malmsbury, p. 49.

books extant, which may not be unworthy of notice.¹⁰³ CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.

ATHELSTAN, amid his greatness, remembered the poor. He decreed, that each of his gerefas should feed in all ways one poor Englishman, if any such they either had or could find. He ordered that, from every two of his farms, one measure of meal, one gammon of bacon, or a ram worth four pennies, should be monthly given; and clothing for twelve months, every year. He also commanded each of them yearly to redeem one miserable being who had forfeited his liberty by a penal adjudication. He left not these charities as mere precepts, which might be executed or neglected without consequences. He attached the interest of his gerefas to their obedience. "If any gerefas shall disregard this, he shall be fined thirty shillings, and the money shall be divided among the needy of the town."¹⁰⁴

It was a common saying of the Anglo-Saxons of Athelstan, that no one more legally or more learnedly conducted a government.¹⁰⁵ It is not at

¹⁰³ It is in Saxon characters in the Cotton Library, Domitian, A. 1. in these words: "Thir rjndon tha bec the Æthelstanef pæpan. De natura rerum; Persius, de arte metrica; Donatum minorem; Excerptiones de metrica arte; Apocalypsin; Donatum majorum; Alchuinum; Glossa super Catonem; Libellum de grammatica arte qui sic incipit, &c. Sedulium 7 1 gepum pær Alppolber ppeortef, Glossa super Donatum, Dialogorum." MSS. p. 55.

¹⁰⁴ Wilkins, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Malmsb. 49.

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all surprising, that he was a favourite both among his own people and in Europe.¹⁰⁶ He was certainly a great and illustrious character. He appears to have been as amiable as great. To the clergy he was attentive and mild; to his people affable and pleasant. With the great he was dignified; with others he laid aside his state, and was condescending and decently familiar. His stature was almost the middle size; his hair yellowish, twisted with golden threads. His people loved him for his bravery and humility; but his enemies felt his wrath.¹⁰⁷

THE memory of Athelstan is stained with the murder of his brother. When Athelstan acceded, his elevation was opposed by one Alfred, who disdained his authority. On his apprehension, there appeared persons who arraigned Edwin, then a youth, the brother of Athelstan, as an accomplice in the rebellion. Edwin, by himself and his friends, implored the confidence of the king, and denied the charge by his oath. But Athelstan ordered Edwin, with one attendant, to be put to sea in a shattered boat without oars. For some time the prince continued in sight of land, but the winds at last rose, and he was carried over the ocean out of hope. In despair, he sprung upon the waves, and was their immediate victim. His body was brought

¹⁰⁶ Tota Europa laudes ejus prædicabat, virtutem in cælum ferebat, &c. Malmsb. 51.

¹⁰⁷ Malmsbury has given us this portrait, p. 50.

to shore between Dover and Whitsand. For CHAP.
seven years, Athelstan mourned his death with II.
a penitence¹⁰⁸ which proved that he gained Athelstan.
nothing by the crime, but self-reproach and
infelicity — the most usual consequence of
guilt!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Malmsb. 48. 53. 251.; Sim. Dun. 134. 154.; Hoveden, 422.; Hunt. 354.; Matt. West. 362.; and Bromton, 836.

¹⁰⁹ In a MS. in the British Museum, Galba, A. 14., the prayer of Athelstan before the battle of Brunanburh is preserved. It begins, "Æla, thu Ðrihten! Æla, thu Æl-mihtiga Loð! Æla Lin̄ ealpa Lýninga, and Ðlaforð ealpa palbenþra! On thæs mihta punath ælc siȝe, and ælc ȝepun peopth to bpȝt," &c.

CHAP. III.

EDMUND *the Elder.*

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Edmund
the Elder.

941.

ATHELSTAN having left no children, his brother Edmund succeeded at the age of eighteen.¹

ANLAF, the Northumbrian prince, who had fought the battle of Brunanburh against Athelstan, renewed his competition with Edmund. The Anglo-Danes of Northumbria encouraged his hopes; they invited him from Ireland, and appointed him their king.²

COLLECTING a great armament, he sailed to York, and thence marched towards Mercia, to wrest the crown of England from the head of Edmund.³ He assaulted Tamworth. Edmund, whom the Saxon song styles “the lord of the English—the protector of his relations—the author of mighty deeds,” armed on the hos-

¹ Flor. Wig. 350.; Sax. Chron. 114.; Al. Bev. 110.; Ing. 29. The Sax. Chron. Tib. B. 4. dates Athelstan's death in 940. So Tib. B. 1.

² Malsmb. 53. Flor. Wig. 350. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. has this passage, which is not in the printed one: “941, heþ Nopthymbra aluzon hwa ȝetƿeopatha ȝ Anlaf of Yplanbe him to cinȝe ȝecupon.”

³ Matt. West. 365.

tility, and marched against Anlaf to the "way of the White Wells, and where the broad stream of the Humber flowed." ⁴

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941.

EDMUND had less abilities or less fortune than Athelstan; or the power of the Anglo-Danes had increased, for Anlaf was victorious at Tamworth.⁵ But the Anglo-Saxon government had been so fortified by the wise administration of three able sovereigns, that the first successes of Anlaf could not overwhelm it. At Leicester, the king surrounded the invader and his friend Wulfstan, the ambitious and turbulent archbishop of York; but they burst at night out of the city.⁶ A battle ensued, in which the skill

⁴ The first paragraph of the reign of Edmund, in the Saxon Chronicle, is obviously an extract from a poem:

Ƣep Eðmunð cýning,
Engla theoden,
Maga munðbopa
Mýnce geeode:
Ðýne ðæb ꝥuma
Spabop ꝥcæbeth
Ƣritan pýllef geat
Ɠ Ƣumbpa ea
Braba bꝥým ꝥtream.

P. 114.

⁵ I have seen this fact no where mentioned but in the MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tiberius, B. 4. "943, Ƣep Anlaf abꝥæc Tameꝥurthe Ɠ micel pæl gefeol on ægthra hanð Ɠ tha ðenan sige ahton Ɠ micle hepe hucbe mið him aꝥeð læbbon. Thæꝥ ƥaf Wulꝥꝥun genumen on thæꝥe heꝥgunge." Hoveden hints, that he advanced to Tamwꝥde, and plundered, p. 423.; but neither mentions the Danish victory, nor the capture of Wulfrun.

⁶ This incident appears only in the MS. Saxon Chronicle,

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and activity of an earl, whose daughter he had married, gave to Anlaf the palm of victory, after a day of conflict.⁷

THESE defeats inclined Edmund to listen to the negotiation of the archbishops of Canterbury and York. A peace was concluded between the princely rivals, on terms highly honourable to Anlaf, but less creditable to Edmund. To Anlaf was surrendered all that part of England which extended north of Watling-street. Edmund contented himself with the southern regions. But a condition, still more humiliating to the Anglo-Saxons, was added: — whoever survived the other was to be the monarch of the whole.⁸ It happened that Anlaf died in the following year; but he must have had great power, or great talents capable of creating power, to have established for himself so near a chance of the crown of England.

THE death of Anlaf removed a perilous competitor, and Edmund availed himself of the

Tib. B. 4. It is not in the printed one, nor in Matthew, nor Florence, nor Hoveden, nor Huntingdon, nor Malmsbury, nor Ethelwerd, nor Ingulf. The passage in the MS. Chronicle is thus: “Ðep Eadmund cýning ýmbræt Anlaf cýning 7 Wulfstan arcebiſcop on Leſpaceaſtre 7 he hý 7epýlbon meahce næpe tha hi on niht ut ne ætburſton of thære byrig.”

⁷ Matt. West. 365.

⁸ Matt. West. 365. Hoveden, 423., admits the peace, but omits the last condition. So Mailros, 148., and Sim. Dun. 134.

casualty to recover the possession of Northumbria.⁹ He also terminated the dangerous independence of the five cities which the Danes had long occupied on the northern frontiers of Mercia and East Anglia. These were Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford, and Lincoln. The preceding kings seem to have suffered the Danes to retain them; but "the warlike heir of Edward"¹⁰ adopted a new policy. He expelled the Northmen, and peopled them with Saxons.¹¹ Two fleeting kings attempted, but in vain, to be permanent in Northumbria.

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III.
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941.

EDMUND extended his conquests to Cumbria, in 946: with the help of the king of South Wales, he ravaged the little kingdom; he cruelly blinded the two sons of Dunmail, who reigned there, and gave it to Malcolm of Scotland, on condition of defending the north of the island against invaders.¹²

946.

⁹ Matt. West. 365.; the Sax. Chron.; Mailros, and others, place Anlaf's death at this time.

¹⁰ So the Saxon Chronicle styles him in a passage which seems to be part of an Anglo-Saxon song.

Wizzenþra hleoþra Eþpapþer.

Sax. Chron. 114.

¹¹ Huntingdon, p. 355.

¹² Matt. West. 366. The condition in the Saxon Chronicle, which dates the event in 945, is, that Malcolm should be his *mib pŷphra* both on sea and land, p. 115. The Welsh Chronicle places it in 944: "Ac y diffieithwyt Strat-clut y gan y saesson." "Strat-clut was ravaged by the Saxons."

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IN the height of his prosperity the king was suddenly killed. The circumstances of his death, however, vary more than a transaction so simple, and so affecting, could be thought to occasion. At Canterbury, according to ¹³ some; at Windechirche, according to another ¹⁴; at Michelesberith, as named by a third ¹⁵; at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire, between the Avon and the Severn, according to ¹⁶ others; the king was feasting on the day of Saint Augustin, which was always commemorated by the Anglo-Saxons. A man, one Leof, appeared among the company, whom Edmund had six years before banished for pillage. Warmed with the liquor which he had been drinking, the king jumped from his seat, seized the man by the hair, and threw him on the ¹⁷ ground;

MS. Cleop. b. v. The MS. Cleop. states the death of Edwal and Elissed against the Saxons.

²³ Thorn. Ch. p. 1779.; Bromton, 858.; Hist. Rames. 389. So the Welsh MS. "945, yd oed Edmund Vrenhin yn kŷnnal gwled yn manachloc Seint Austyn yngkeint." Cleop. b. v.

²⁴ Mailros, 148.

²⁵ Matt. West. 366.

²⁶ Malsb. 54. Al. Bev. 111. Hoveden, 423. Ing. 29.

²⁷ Malsb. 54. So the Welsh Chronicle: "Ac val ýdoed yn bwrw golwc ar hyt ý neuad ef a welei Lleidyr a rydaroed y dehol or ýnys kŷnnno hýnný ar brenhin a gynodes ý vŷnŷ ac a doeth hýt yn lle ýdoed ý lleidýr ac ýmavael ac ef ger wallt y. ben aý dýnnv dros ý bwrt." "And, as he was casting his eye along the hall, he saw a thief, who had been given over to banishment from the island before. The king arose im-

others state, that Leof had quarrelled with the king's cup-bearer, and was about to destroy him, when Edmund interfered¹⁸; another, perhaps more truly, mentions, that amidst the bacchanalian jollity, a discord, as generally happens, suddenly arose among the guests. In the midst of their fury, the king rose from table to appease, perhaps to share in the tumult, when the exiled robber stabbed him with a dagger, which he had secreted.¹⁹ It is, however, singular, that, on an incident so palpable and so impressive, such a contrariety of rumours became popular; that Malmsbury states, that his death opened the door for fable all over England²⁰; and Wallingford was so perplexed as to aver, that it was to his day uncertain who was the murderer, or what was the²¹ cause.

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III.
Edmund
the Elder.
946.

mediately, and went to the place where the thief was, and laid hold of him by the hair of his head to draw him over the table." MS. Cleop. b. v.

¹⁸ Flor. Wig. 352. Hoveden, 423. It is said by Alur. Bev. 111. that the king wished to save his Dapifer from the hands of his enemies. Matt. West. narrates, that the king, seeing Leof, nodded to his cup-bearer to turn him out. Leof resisting, Edmund rushed in anger upon him, p. 366.

¹⁹ Hist. Rames. 389.

²⁰ Quo vulnere exanimatus fabulæ januam in omnem Angliam de interitu suo patefecit, p. 54.

²¹ Sed qua ratione vel a quo occisus fuit usque ad præsens incertum habetur. Chron. p. 541. The MS. Saxon Chronicle has a passage on Edmund's death, not in the printed one: "Tha pær pibe cuth hu he hƿ ȝaȝar ȝeenbobe tha Liofa hinc æƿƿrang æt Pulcan cƿƿean. Tib. b. iv.

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Instances like these, which often occur in the history of man, prove the truth of the observation of our intelligent moralist, that "the usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety." ²²

²² Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 289. 5th ed. 8vo.; a work which displays a highly accomplished and candid mind in the full exertion of its enlightened energies.

CHAP. IV.

The Reign of EDRED.

EDRED, who succeeded Edmund, was the third son of Edward, who had reigned after his father, Alfred. As the preceding king, the elder brother of Edred, was but eighteen years of age when he acceded, Edred must have been less than twenty-three at his elevation. His reign was short. Disease produced to him that crisis which the arm of violence had occasioned to his predecessor.

CHAP.
IV.
Edred.

946.

THE most remarkable circumstance of Edred's short reign was, the complete incorporation of Northumbria. It had been often conquered before. Its independence was now entirely annihilated.

It has been mentioned, that Athelstan gave the Northumbrian crown to Eric, the son of Harald of Norway, who had been expelled his paternal inheritance, for his fratricides and cruelty. But peaceful dignity can have no charms except for the cultivated mind, the sensualist, or the timid. It is only a scene of apathy to those who have been accustomed to the violent agitations of barbarian life; whose

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noblest hope has been an ample plunder; whose most pleasurable excitations have arisen from the exertion and the triumphs of war. Eric therefore still loved the activity of depredation. The numerous friends with kindred feelings, who crowded to him from Norway, displeased or disappointed with the government of Haco, cherished his turbulent feelings; and to feed, to employ, or to emulate them, he amused his summer months by pirating on Scotland, the Hebrides, Ireland, and Wales.¹ In the reign of Edmund, perceiving that this king or his unquiet subjects desired a new regent, he hastened to his beloved ocean and its plunder. From the Orkneys he collected some companions. In the Hebrides he found many vikingr and sea-kings², who joined their forces to aid his fortunes. He led them first to Ireland; thence to Wales; and, at last reaching England, he plundered extensively. The Northumbrians again received him as their king³, and Eric became formidable to the Anglo-Saxons.

It had happened that before this event, this people had sworn fidelity to Edred, at Tadwine's

¹ Snorre, *Saga Hakonar Goda*, c. iv. p. 128.

² Snorre, *ibid*.

³ Flor. Wig. 352. He calls him Ircus. Saxon Chronicle says, Yric, the son of Harold, p. 115. So Wallingford, 541. The Chronicle of Mailros also calls him Eyric the son of Harold, p. 148. Ingulf names him Hircius, p. 30. Simeon calls him Eiric, a Dane, 134. Matt. West. has Eilric, p. 368.

Cliffe.⁴ Provoked by this rebellion, Edred assembled an army, and spread devastation over Northumbria. As he returned, the Northmen warily followed him from York, and at Casterford surprised and destroyed his rear guard. Enraged at the disaster, the king stopped his retreat, and again sought Northumbria with augmented fury. Terrified at his power and its effects, the people threw off Eric, and appeased Edred with great pecuniary sacrifices.⁵

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946.

BUT Eric was not to be discarded with impunity. He collected his forces, and gave battle to the revoltors. Snorre mentions Olaf as the friend of Edred.⁶ Simeon of Durham omits him, but notices his son Maccus.⁷ The Ice-lander states the battle to have lasted the whole day, and that Eric and five other kings, among whom he names Gothorm, and his sons Ivar and Harekr, probably sea-kings, perished; Rognvalldr and others also fell.⁸ Our chronicler, Matthew, admits such a catastrophe, but states

⁴ Hoveden, 423. Flor. 352. The printed Chronicle has nothing of this. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. b. iv. states it.

⁵ Flor. Wig 352, 353. Hoveden, 423. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. b. iv. supplies on this incident the silence of the one printed, by a long passage, of which the paragraphs in Florence and Hoveden seem to be a translation. In the MS. Tib. b. i. there is a blank from 946 to 956.

⁶ Hakonar Saga, p. 129.

⁷ Simeon, 204.

⁸ Snorre, 129. He errs in placing the catastrophe under Edmund.

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946.

that Osulf betrayed Eric, and that Maccus fraudulently killed him in a desert.⁹

EDRED improved the moment by exerting all the power of conquest. He carried away in bonds the proudest nobles of the country, and overspread it with devastation¹⁰; he imprisoned Wulfstan, the turbulent archbishop¹¹; he annexed Northumbria inseparably to his dominions; and to govern it the more easily, he partitioned it into baronies and counties, over which he placed officers of his own appointment.¹² Osulf, whose treachery had produced the destruction of Eric, was the first earl; to whom in another reign Oslac was added.¹³

955.

IN 955, Edred died; but not worn out by old age, as some have dreamt.¹⁴ One expression

⁹ Matt. West. 369. Sim. 204. Matthew says, "that with Eric fell his son Henricus, and his brother Reginaldus. He perhaps means the Harekr and Rognvalldr of Snorre. Our writers mention no battle; but this additional incident is highly credible. Mailros calls Eric the last king of Northumbria, 148.

¹⁰ Ingulf, 41. He adds a strong picture of Edred's invasion: "Erasaque tota terra et in cineres redacta ita ut multis milliariis longo tempore sequenti solitudo fieret."

¹¹ Flor. 353. Matt. West. 369. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. b. iv. is like the passage in Florence.

¹² Wallingford, 541.

¹³ Mailros, 148. Sim. Dun. 204.

¹⁴ It is curious to read in Wallingford, p. 542., that old age greatly vexed Edred, and that multis incommodis quæ senes solent circumvenire ad extrema deduxit. Among these evils of senility, he particularises the loss of teeth, debility, and the frequent cough, familiaris senibus. Yet this old man

has descended to us concerning him, *debilis pedibus*, weak in the feet.¹⁵ We also learn from the writing of an author, almost, if not quite, his contemporary, that his indisposition, rather an offensive one, lasted all his reign; and, by a gradual wasting, produced his death.¹⁶

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Edred.

955.

could not have been much above thirty; for he was under twenty-three at his accession, and he reigned nine years. The chronicler mistook the consequences of disease, for the natural effects of old age.

¹⁵ It is Hermannus who has left us this trait. His MS. is in the Cotton Library, Tib. b. ii.

¹⁶ Vita Dunstani, p. 75. MS. Cotton Library, Cleopatra, b. xiii.

CHAP. V.

The Reign of Edwin.

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Edwin.

955.

EDWIN¹, who has been usually called Edwy, the eldest son of Edmund the Elder, suc-

¹ He is commonly called Edwy; but the old authorities are numerous, which express his name to have been Edwin. Of chroniclers that have been printed, he is styled Edwin—by Ingulf, p. 41.; by Alured of Beverly, p. 111.; by Simeon Dunelm, p. 135.; by Wallingford, 541.; by Ethelridus Rievalsensis, 359.; by Knyghton, 2312.; by Hoveden, 425.; by Bromton, 863.; by Malmsbury, 201.; by the Hist. Rame-siensis, 389.; by Thorn, 2243.; by Higden, 263.; by Radulf de Diceto, 455.; and by the authors in Leland's Collectanea, vol. i. p. 241. 260. 304. and vol. iii. p. 399. Rudborne says, Edwyi, sive Edwini, p. 217. The unpublished MSS. in the Cotton Library, that I have seen, which name him Edwin, are also numerous. The Chronicles in Dom. A. xii. p. 62.; Dom. A. 3.; Peter de Ickham, p. 24.; Vesp. E. iv. p. 110.; Faustina, A. viii. p. 77. and b. vi. p. 66.; Thomas de Elmham; Claudius, E. iv. p. 54.; Nero, A. vi. p. 9.; Vesp. b. xi. p. 1. and 73.; Cleop. b. xiii. p. 130.; Vesp. A. xvi. p. 43.; and Joh. Oxenedes, Nero, D. ii. p. 215.; Calig, A. iii. p. 19.; also, in the King's Library, 13. D. 1.; so the Welsh Chron. Cleop. b. v. But the Saxon Chronicle, 115.; Ethelwerd, 849.; and a coin (see it in Gough's Camden, cxv.) have Eadwig. Matt. West. printed, has Edwius. A MS. of part of his book, erroneously entitled Godefrid of Malmsbury, has Edwinus. Vesp. D. iv. p. 96. Edwin and Edwig have the same meaning — “prosperous in battle.” On the whole it

ceeded his uncle Edred, at the age of sixteen.² CHAP.

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955.

It was his misfortune to live in one of those periods, which have frequently occurred in the history of mankind, when new opinions and new systems are introduced into society, which essentially counteract the subsisting establishments. The ardour of the discussions, and the opposition of interests and prejudices, inflame the mind and passions of the country; cruelty and persecution, hatred and revenge, usually accompany the conflict, and both the advocates for the revolution and its opponents become alike fanatical, ferocious, unjust, and implacable.

appears to me, that Edwy, Edwin, and Edwig, are the same name; but as Edwy is apparently a familiar abbreviation, it cannot be entitled to a place in history any more than Willy or Harry: I have therefore inserted Edwin, which has most authorities in its favour.

² For Edwin to have been sixteen at his accession, his father must have married at fifteen, because Edmund was eighteen in 941. This seems almost too early to be true; and yet there is no alternative, for Edwin, at his coronation, appears to us also as married. It shows us, indeed, how early the Anglo-Saxons sometimes united — Edmund at fifteen; his son Edwin at sixteen. If there be an error any where, it must be in Edmund's age at his accession, for that makes him and Edred to have been born in the two last years of their father's reign; yet Edmund's age is attested by Ingulf, Flor. Al. Bev. already quoted, and also by the Sax. Chron. 144.; Sim. Dun. 155.; Malmsb. 53.; and others. Eadgiva, the mother of Edwin and Edgar, left a will, which yet exists: in this she mentions Edwin, and she calls him a child. See it in the appendix to Lye's Saxon Dictionary.

BOOK

VI.

Edwin.

The Bene-
dictine
Order.

IN the tenth century, a new religious discipline was spreading in Europe, which occasioned the misfortunes of the reign of Edwin. This was the Benedictine order of monks — an order which, in the course of time, became celebrated in Europe beyond every other.³

IT is a fact perpetually pressed upon the notice of the historian, that individuals often appear who seem to act at random, yet whose notions are destined to affect ages and nations. One of these was Benedict, an Italian, born 480⁴, whose peculiar associations of thought induced him to descend into a deep cavern in a desert, and to reside there for several years, known only to a friend, who let down his provisions. His singularities attracted notice, and, being connected with a piety that seems to have been genuine, though enthusiastic, at last produced veneration. His admiring spectators were so numerous, that he was enabled to found many monasteries near him. He afterwards went to Mount Cassin, in the kingdom of Naples, destroyed some temples of idolatry which he found

³ It is not, however, safe to adopt implicitly the statement of Trithemius, p. 238., though Baronius follows it. This enumerates eighteen popes, above 200 cardinals, 1600 archbishops, about 4000 bishops, 15,700 abbots, and 15,600 saints, to have been of the order before his time, who was born 1462.

⁴ Dupin, vol. ii. p. 45. sixth century. Fab. Bib. Med. 1. p. 533.

there, erected a monastery, and laid down a new series of rules for its governance.⁵

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BENEDICT died about 543.⁶ Soon afterwards the Lombards destroyed his monastery at Mount Cassin. The monks fled to pope Pelagius, who, by giving them an asylum, kept alive an institution destined to overspread the West.

THE memory of Benedict was preserved, and peculiarly sanctified by the famous pope Gregory, who devoted one book of dialogues to record his pretended miracles.⁷ By the influence of the third Gregory, who died 742, the monastery at Mount Cassin was rebuilt, and this new construction first began the establishment of its fame. Zachary, the following pope, sent them the MS. rule of Benedict, and gave them, as a mark of his favour, the important and attractive privilege of being under no bishop, and no jurisdiction, but that of the pope.⁸

THE Benedictine rule began now to diffuse itself beyond Italy. Boniface, the Anglo-Saxon missionary to Germany, built a Benedictine monastery in Fulda, which the Pope sanctioned,

⁵ The rule is in the Bibliotheca Magna Patrum, vol. xv. p. 690. There are also some Anglo-Saxon translations of it in the Cotton Library; and one exposition of it by Dunstan, with his picture. Bib. Reg. 10. A. 13.

⁶ Fabricius mentions that others talk of 542, and 547.

⁷ Gregory's Dial. lib. ii. Gregory characterises his rule as, discretione præcipuam, sermone luculentam. Dial. p. 275.

⁸ See Marsham's *Περικύλειος*, prefixed to Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. i.

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and which Pepin exempted from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but the papal.⁹ Boniface describes his monks as men of strict abstinence, who used neither flesh, wine, nor strong drink, nor servants, but who were contented with the produce of their own labour.¹⁰ He interested Carloman so much in his favour, that in his reign the clergy of Gaul were urged to patronise it.¹¹

THE order increased, though slowly, till the beginning of the tenth century. Berno, preferring it to other monastic rules, introduced it at Clugny in 910. One of his pupils was Odo, who succeeded him, and who seconded his partiality to this order; added something to its regulations, and endeavoured to introduce it at Fleury, whither the body of Benedict had been transported from Cassin.¹²

FLEURY having been plundered by the Normans, the monks who returned to it were living irregularly when Odo began his attempt. They opposed him at first even with weapons. His eloquence or sagacity so changed their feelings, that before his death, in 944, it was so

⁹ See the letters of Boniface and Zachary, 16. Mag. Bib. Pat. 115. and of Pepin, p. 121. Our countryman describes the place thus: "Est præterea locus sylvaticus in eremo vastissimæ solitudinis." Ibid. 115.

¹⁰ Bonif. *ibid.*

¹¹ See the two councils held in 742, in Bib. Mag. Pat. p. 84, 85.

¹² Marsham *ubi sup.* There is a MS. of one of Odo's works. Bib. Reg. 6. D. 5.

firmly established at Fleury, that this place became the chief seminary from which it was diffused through the West.

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ITS success as an instrument of discipline; the sanctified celebrity of its author; the necessity of some reformation among the monks and clergy, and the novelty of this, gave it a sudden and extending popularity. Fleury became famous for its superior discipline and virtues, and its monks were sent for to other places, to reform and to regulate them. Thus it perpetually happens in human life, that new plans become popular, and spread far beyond their intrinsic merit, because they happen to soothe some momentary feeling, promote some meditated interest, or supply an existing deficiency. In the present case it seems that the Benedictine discipline, however objectionable it may appear to us, was the best form of monastic life which had then been conceived; and was therefore wisely adopted by those who valued monastic institutions. Hence the spirit of improvement at the same time passed also into Flanders, and eighteen monasteries there were reformed by the exertions of abbot Gerard.

THE monastery of Fleury was eagerly encouraging the rule, when Odo, an ecclesiastic in England, was offered the see of Canterbury. He was the son of one of those ferocious Northmen who had infested England under Ingwar

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and Ubbo.¹³ He had been himself a soldier in the first part of life, in the reign of ¹⁴ Edward, and he quitted the military profession to assume the ecclesiastic. He attended Athelstan in the battle of Brunanburh; and, as other bishops often combated at that time, and as it is confessed that he knew immediately of the king's sword breaking in the conflict, and supplied the loss, it is probable that he partook of the ¹⁵ fray, though his encomiasts talk only of his prayers. These circumstances may be worth noticing, as they explain that stern severity of temper which was so unhappily exerted against Edwin and Elgiva. He was raised through other gradations to the primacy of England.

WHEN Odo was offered the see of Canterbury, he was unwilling to accept it, from his enthusiastic zeal for the new system, until he had become a monk; and he selected Fleury as the place wherein he chose to make his ¹⁶ profession.

Odo came to his metropolitan dignity a decisive friend, and an aspiring patron of the Benedictine order: but though high in favour with several sovereigns, he made no effort to compel the English to adopt the reform of

¹³ Malmsb. 200. Osberne, 2 Ang. Sax. p. 78.

¹⁴ Malmsb. 200. Matt. West. 359.

¹⁵ Though councils and kings expressly forbad ecclesiastics to mix in battle, (see pope Zachary's letter to the bishops, 16 Mag. Bib. Pat. p. 110—116. and Boniface, *ibid.* p. 106.) yet it was very frequent at this time.

¹⁶ Chron. Petrib. 26. Malmsb. 200.

Fleury. A letter of his to the clergy of the country, exhorting them to discharge their duty with zealous care, yet exists ¹⁷; but it does not even mention the Benedictine system.

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THE man who roused England to establish the new discipline among its clergy was DUNSTAN, a character formed by nature to act a distinguished part in the varied theatre of life. ¹⁸ The

Life of
Dunstan.

¹⁷ See it in Malmsb. de Pont. p. 200. Its first phrase is an unfortunate attempt at eloquent latinity. "Mirabili cuncti potentis præsulis polorum clementia opitulante, Ego Odo," &c. Another sentence expresses something of his temper, "Spirituali charitate, *etiam comitatus rigore*." There is another letter of his in Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 50.

¹⁸ There are several lives of Dunstan extant. One written by Osberne, who flourished about the year 1070. See it in Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 88. One also by Eadmer, p. 211. There are two ancient ones in the Cotton library. One, Nero, C. 7., was written by Adalardus Blandiniensis Monachus, in the tenth century, or in the beginning of the eleventh, addressed to Elphegus, the archbishop of Canterbury, and composed at his request. But the author says, "Scias autem in opere isto hystoriam vitæ ejus non contineri sed ex eadem vita quasi brevem sermonis versiculum," &c. This life is full of miracles and panegyric, with scarcely any biographical notices. The most curious and ancient life of Dunstan is in the same library, Cleopatra, B. 13. It was written by a person who was his contemporary, or nearly so. For, speaking of an incident in his monastery, he says, it happened when all the monks were absent, except Dunstan, parvo que scholastico qui postea Pontifex effectus hæc nobis intimavit. It has plenty of flattery and wonder, but it contains some curious traits of biography, which enable us to sketch his mind. Matthew of Westminster, Malmsbury, and Osberne, have taken many things from it. It seems to be the one mentioned by Wharton, with the name of Bridferth; and so printed in the *Acta Sanctorum*.

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following review of his life is made with a desire to be just towards him, without abandoning the right of free judgment on his actions, and of fair inference as to the principles by which they were directed.

HE was born in 925.¹⁹ His parents were Heorstan and Cynethryth²⁰, who seem to have lived near Glastonbury.²¹ He frequently visited the old British church there.²² It is said that he had here a vision of his future greatness, and that a venerable phantom pointed out the place where he was to build a superb²³ monastery. Ambitious talents, meditating much on the honours they covet, may experience sometimes

¹⁹ In the year of Athelstan's accession, which some place 924, and some 925. Matt. West. 360.

²⁰ MSS. Cleop. B. 13. Adelard, in Nero, C. 7., is so impatient to get at his miracles, that he annexes one to Dunstan before he was born.

²¹ *Erat autem regalis in confinio ejusdem præfati viri insula antiquo vicinorum vocabulo Glastonia nuncupata.* MSS. Cleop. B. 13. This life of Dunstan had been read by Malmsbury, for he quotes this passage from it; and says, he saw the book at St. Augustin's in Canterbury, and at another place. *De Ant. Glast.* p. 293. The MS. in the Cotton Library, is probably the identical book which our Malmsbury saw; for Joscelin has written upon it, that in August, 1565, he found it among other old MSS. at the Augustine monastery at Canterbury. Usher has added a note making the same inference.

²² The author's phrase is, that the first Neophytes found there an old church not built with human hands. I translate his words to mean, that the Anglo-Saxons found one there ready built, and of course by the Britons.

²³ MSS. Cleop.

such illusions amid the nightly chimeras of the reposing though disturbed imagination.

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Edwin.

His parents encouraged him to study, and his penetrating abilities enabled him to excel his companions, and to run with easy rapidity through the course of his studies.²⁴

A FEVER interrupted his advancement, and all the horrors of a temporary frenzy ensued, accompanied with that debility which in this disease sometimes announces the departure of life, and sometimes a crisis which is to end in convalescence. In this state a sudden access of delirium came on. He leapt from his bed, eluded his nurse, and seizing a stick which was near him, he ran over the neighbouring plains and mountains, fancying that wild dogs were pursuing him. His wanderings led him towards night near the church. Workmen, during the day, had been mending the roof. Dunstan ran wildly up their scaffold, roamed over the top, and with that casual felicity which frenzy sometimes experiences, got unconsciously to the bottom of the church, where a heavy sleep concluded his delirious excursion.²⁵ He waked with re-

²⁴ Adelard calls him, *indole acerrimus*. Nero, C. 7. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. says, *coetaneos quosque præcellerat et suorum tempora studiorum facili cursu transiliret*.

²⁵ This is the statement in the MS. Cleop. B. 13., which I think to be peculiarly valuable, because it shows us the simple and natural truth of an incident which the future biographers of Dunstan have converted into an elaborate and ridiculous miracle. It gives a good specimen how monastic fancy, by

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turned intellect, and was surprised at his new situation. As the church doors had not been opened, both he and the attendants of the place wondered how he got there.²⁶

His parents obtained for him an introduction into the ecclesiastical establishment at Glastonbury. He continued his studious applications, and there is no reason to disbelieve the statement, that his conduct at this time was moral and religious.²⁷

SOME Irish ecclesiastics had settled at Glaston-

its peculiar machinery, has transformed natural incidents into celestial achievements. When reflection sobers the mind of Achilles, it is Pallas who descends to whisper in his ear; when Dunstan runs over a church in a delirium, angels are called down to protect him from the devil, to burst the roof, and to place him safely on the pavement.

²⁶ This ancient life gives to this event none of those appendages of angels and devils, which credulity afterwards added. After mentioning his sleep, it merely says, "*Exsurgens autem post momenti spatium ammirari admodum una cum custodibus cæperat quo pacto, quove ingenio introierat, cernens etiam quod templi ostium clausum munitum que extiterat.*" MS. Cleop. Its next phrase, that Dunstan acknowledged the hand of Providence in his preservation, merely expresses his pious feelings. It does not invest it with the miraculous colouring of later writers. The wonderful was, however, soon added, for we find it in Adelard; and yet even his statement reveals the truth, and shows that the falsehood was the creature of ignorance. "*Ubi mane inventus cum consuleratur qualiter ille incolumis adveniret, qui sero pene contiguus morti exterius erat relictus hoc se ignorare respondit et rumorem miraculi grata ignorantia auxit.*" Adelard, MSS. Nero, C. 7.

²⁷ MSS. Cleop. B. 13.

bury, and were teaching the liberal studies to the children of the nobility. Dunstan attached himself to their instructions, and diligently explored their books.²⁸

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THE first part of his life was a laborious cultivation of mind, and he seems to have attained all the knowledge to which it was possible for him to gain access. He mastered such of the mathematical sciences as were then taught; he excelled in music; he accomplished himself in writing, painting, and engraving; he acquired also the manual skill of working in gold and silver, and even copper and iron.²⁹ These arts had not at that day reached any pre-eminent merit, but it was uncommon that a man should practise himself in all. To have excelled his contemporaries in mental pursuits, in the fine arts, though then imperfectly practised, and in mechanical labours, is evidence of an activity of intellect, and an ardour for improvement, which proclaim him to have been a superior personage, whose talents might have blessed the world.

²⁸ Osberne Vita Dunstani, p. 92. MS. Cleop. B. 13.

²⁹ Osberne, 93, 94. His attainments are thus enumerated in the MS. Cleop. B. 13.: "Hic itaque inter sacra litterarum studia—artem scribendi nec ne citharizandi pariter que pingendi peritiam diligenter excoluit atque ut ita dicam omnium rerum utensilium vigil inspector fulsit." This MS. mentions a particular instance of his painting and embroidery: "Quandam stolam diversis formularum scematibus perpingeret quam postea posset auro gemmis que variando pompare." It also mentions, that he took with him ex more cytharam suam quam, lingua paterna, *hearþam* vocamus.

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VI.

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WHEN his age admitted, he commenced his career of public life as a courtier. Some relation introduced him into the royal palace, and his musical talents interested and often recreated the king.³⁰

No circumstance can more impressively attest the superiority of Dunstan's attainments, than his having been accused, while at court, of demoniacal arts.³¹ Such charges give demonstration of the talents and knowledge of the person so accused. In the very same century another man of eminence suffered under a similar imputation, because he had made a sphere, invented clocks, and attempted a telescope.³² The charge of magic was of all others

³⁰ Adelard says, "*De Glestonia egressus Archo Dornberensi Adelmo patruo scilicet suo se junxit et cohabitare cæpit—in palatio cum præsentavit et regi Athelstano—magno affectu commendavit.*" Nero, C. 7. Osberne implies the same, p. 94. But I think the king should be Edmund. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. mentions his living in Edmund's palace, where plans were formed against him.

³¹ *Asserentes illum malis artibus imbutum nec quicquam divino auxilio sed plæraque dæmonum præstigio operari,* Osb. 95. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. thus expresses it: "*Dicentes eum ex libris salutaribus et viris peritis non salutis animæ profutura sed avitæ gentilitatis vanissima dedecisse carmina et histriarum colere incantationes.*"

³² This was Gerbert, who became archbishop of Rheims and of Ravenna; and in 999 was made pope, under the name of Sylvester II. "He had learned the mathematics in Spain: his knowledge made him pass for a magician, and gave rise to the fable of his being promoted to the papal chair by a contract which he made with the devil." Dupin, 10 cen. p. 44.; and see Matt. West. 348., and Malmsb. 65.

the most destructive, because the most difficult to repel. Every exertion of superior intellect in defence was misconstrued to be preternatural, and confirmed the imputation.

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HIS enemies were successful. The king was influenced against him, and Dunstan was driven from court³³; — from that Eden of his hopes, where, like another Wolsey, he was planning to be naturalised.

HIS courtly rivals were not content with his disgrace: they insulted as well as supplanted him; they pursued and threw him into a miry marsh. He extricated himself on their retreat, and reached a friend's house about a mile distant.³⁴

THUS far Dunstan appears neither unamiable nor uninteresting. Youthful ambition is the parent of much excellence; while subordinate to reason and duty it is an honourable energy in the spring-time of life, when the buds of expectation are incessantly shooting. Dunstan's pursuit of distinction, though perhaps questionable as to its prudence, was no immoral impulse. His means were the most honourable he could employ — the cultivation of his mind, the increase of his knowledge, and the fair exertion of his beneficial acquisitions.

To be checked in the first madness of our juvenile ambition, may often introduce the in-

³³ MS. Cleop. B. 13.

³⁴ MS. Cleop.

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valuable treasures of moderate wishes, moral prudence, and becoming humility. There is no evidence that the effects of Dunstan's disgrace were at first any other. He was repelled from the paths of political greatness, and he submitted to the necessity; he turned his eye from the proud but tempestuous mountains of life, to its lowly but pleasant vales, where happiness loves to abide, the companion of the industrious, the contented, and the good. After he left the court, he formed an attachment to a maiden, whom he wished to marry.³⁵

It is with regret we read that such honourable impressions were deemed to be diabolical suggestions by the relations and biographers of Dunstan. The bishop Ælfheag, his relation, opposed them. Attached by his own taste and habits to the ecclesiastical order, he conjured him to become a monk, a character then much venerated, and, notwithstanding its superstitions, allied to many virtues.

DUNSTAN was at first insensible to his oratory. He replied to Ælfheag's reasoning, that the

³⁵ It is the MS. Cleop. which informs us of this curious circumstance. It says, the devil *primum enim mulierum illi injecit amorem quo per familiares earum amplexus mundanis oblectamentis frueretur. Interea propinquus ipsius Ælfheagus cognomine Calvus præsul quo fidelis petitionibus multus et spiritualibus monitis eum rogavit ut fieret monachus. Quod ille instinctu præfati fraudatoris renuntians maluit sponsare juvenculam cujus cotidie blanditiis foveretur quam more monachorum bidentinis indui panniculis.*

man who lived from choice regularly in the world, was of greater excellence than he who, having entered a monastery, could not avoid doing what his order enjoined. The man in the world displays moral freedom and voluntary rectitude; the monk was a creature of compulsion and necessity. Ælfheag opposed the discriminating remark, by arguing on the future punishment, on the importance of extinguishing the fire of passion, and of avoiding its incitements by withdrawing from the world.³⁶ Dunstan still resisted: his relation continued to importune him.

THESE unfortunate entreaties disturbed the mind of Dunstan. He became agitated by a tumult of contending passions. With the monastic habit were connected all the internal enjoyments of piety to those who valued them, and to those who were less devout it gave a release from the dread of futurity, the reputation and the means of peculiar sanctity, and an impressive empire over the minds of men. But it exacted a renunciation of the charms of mutual affection, of the delights of a growing family, and of those numerous gratifications with which social life in every age abounds. His health was unequal to the conflict: a dangerous disease attacked him³⁷ before he could decide, and his life was despaired of. He lay without a prospect

³⁶ Osberne, 95.

³⁷ MS. Cleop. And see Osberne's statement, p. 96.

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of recovery, and so senseless, that the pulse of life seemed to have ceased: at last it slowly returned, and life renewed in gradual convalescence. But he rose from the bed of sickness with an altered mind. He renounced the flattering world, assumed the monastic habit, and condemned himself to celibacy.³⁸

BUT to give new directions to our feelings, by the violence of terror, is to produce changes of thought and action, neither salutary to our moral principles, nor calculable in their consequences. Dunstan, while ardent with passions not dishonourable in youth, was driven forcibly from civil honours, and was afterwards excluded from social life. In obedience to duty, fear, importunity, and some new impressions, but in direct contradiction to his own earlier wishes and prospects, he became a monk. Does the incessant experience of human nature teach us to expect that an amiable, benevolent, or virtuous character, would result from these compulsions? Checked in our dearest, and not immoral propensities, are we never soured by the disappointment, never irritated by the injustice? Driven by violence into the schemes of others, will not

³⁸ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osberne, 96. Mr. Lingard talks of the "*anile credulity*" of Osberne. His epithets are just; but how can he apply them fairly to Osberne, and not extend them to all, or nearly all, the legends of his church which crowd the hundred volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists? Is Osberne more anile than almost all the writers of the Catholic Hagiography?

individuals of strong feelings become artificial characters? harshly coerced themselves, will they not be indurated towards others? Is not selfishness, with all its power of mischief, most likely to become afterwards the ruling principle? It is, indeed, true, that exalted virtue will rise superior to every temptation to misanthropy and vice. Many are the glorious minds who have withstood the fiery trial; and whoever loves virtue as he ought, will pursue it, unaffected by the follies of man, or the accidents of life. Many, however, fall the victims of their vicissitudes; and the remainder of Dunstan's life will best show how far he was of the number.

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THE predominant features in Dunstan's character were energy and ambition. The path of life to which he was forced did not extinguish these tendencies, though it may have added peculiarity and severity. His superior mind and all its acquisitions still remained: but it was necessary that all its peculiarities should thereafter be displayed in the language, garb, and manners of a monk. The aspiring soldier seeks distinction in the field of battle by excelling in courage; the ambitious recluse pursues the phantom in his lonely cell, by extraordinary penances, and a superior superstition. Dunstan had now only this way to fame; and from his future actions we infer that he pursued it with an earnestness which every year became more separated from moral principle, and which at

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last poisoned his mind and injured his contemporaries, but gratified his passion.

HE made with his own hands a subterraneous cave or cell, so unlike any thing of the sort, that his biographer, who had seen it, knew not what to call it.³⁹ It was more like a grave than a human habitation. Cells were commonly dug in an eminence, or raised from the earth: this was the earth itself excavated. It was five feet long and two and a half wide. Its height was the stature of a man standing in the excavation. Its only wall was its door, which covered the whole, and in this was a small aperture to admit light and air.⁴⁰

Do not such singularities as these reveal either an inflamed imagination in the sincere, or a crafty ambition in the hypocritical? Genuine piety is modest, private, and unaffected. Piety, when assumed as a mask to cover or to assist inordinate ambition, or connected with a disordered fancy,

³⁹ Non enim invenio qua id appellatione quam proxime vocem; cum non tam humani habitaculi quam formam gerat sepulchri, propriis laboribus fabricavit. Osberne, 96.

⁴⁰ Osberne, 96. This author's additional exclamation is worth translating, for its singularity: "Wretch and sinner as I am; I confess that I have seen this holy place of his residence. I have seen the works of his hands. I have touched them with sinful hands, have brought them to my eyes, watered them with my tears, and adored them with bended knees. I remembered how often he has heard my petitions in my perils, and therefore I did not refrain my tears; nor if I could have avoided it, would I have left the place." Ibid.

labours to be ostentatious, absurd, extravagant, and frantically superstitious. If Dunstan's mind had been of weak texture, the selection of such a cell might be referred to its imperfections; but in a man of his talents, it is more likely to have been the deliberate choice of his policy.

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ONE of the legendary tales which has been used to exalt his fame, shows, if it ever happened, the arts by which he gained it. Dunstan carried to his sepulchral cell a fragment of his former disposition. He exercised himself in working on metals. One night all the neighbourhood was alarmed by the most terrific howlings, which seemed to issue from his abode. In the morning they flocked to him to enquire the cause: he told them that the devil had intruded his head into his window to tempt him while he was heating his work; that he had seized him by the nose with his red hot tongs, and that the noise was Satan's roaring at the pain.⁴¹ The simple people are stated to have venerated the recluse for this amazing exploit. They forgot to recollect that he might himself have made the clamour, to extort their morning wonder at his fabricated tale.

ALL ages and ranks united to spread his fame⁴², and a substantial benefit soon accrued. A noble lady, Ethelfleda, of royal descent, who was passing a quiet life of widowhood, was

⁴¹ Osberne, 96, 97.⁴² Ibid. 97.

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 Edwin. attracted into his vicinity, was charmed by his conversation, and religiously loved him. She introduced him to the king, who visited her; and what gave him immediately an importance of the most interesting nature, she left him at her death, which happened soon afterwards, the heir of all her wealth.⁴³ It is stated that he distributed his acquisitions among the poor.

DUNSTAN'S reputation and connection made him known to Edmund, who invited him to court.⁴⁴ He eagerly obeyed. The prospects of his youth began to shine again; but he beheld them with very different feelings. The world, and all its pleasures, would then have been his harvest; but now the peculiar path of monastic life was that which he had to tread.

At court, though he made many friends, he had also many enemies. He surmounted, however, all opposition; for the chancellor Turketul supported him⁴⁵, and the first step of his future aggrandisement was laid by the acquisition of the monastery of Glastonbury, to which he was appointed abbot by the king.⁴⁶

THE Benedictine order being now so popular in Europe, Dunstan introduced it into his mo-

⁴³ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osberne, 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Ibid. 99.

⁴⁵ Ingulf, 38.

⁴⁶ MS. Cleop. This says, that the king took him to Glastonbury, et apprehensa ejus dextra causa placationis seu etiam dignitatis osculatus est illum. And see Adelard, Nero, C. 7.

nastery ⁴⁷, and made himself its most active patron. CHAP. V. Edwin.

THE new abbot gained so rapidly upon the prejudices of his age, that his youth was no impediment to his aggrandisement. If the year of his birth is truly stated ⁴⁸, he could be only twenty-two at the accession of Edred, and thirty-one at his demise; yet before Edred's coronation, he was made abbot of Glastonbury, and he was afterwards chosen by Edred for his confidential friend and counsellor. To him, this king sent all his choicest treasures, and those amassed by the preceding sovereigns, to be kept in his monastery under his inspection. ⁴⁹

FROM the next incident the policy of Dunstan seems to have been foreseeing and refined. The see of Winchester was offered to him by the king; but he refused it, on the pretence of unfitness. The king entreated his mother to invite him to dinner, and to add her persuasions; but Dunstan declared he could not leave the king, and would not, in his days, even accept the metropolitan honour. ⁵⁰

⁴⁷ MS. Cleop. MS. Nero; and Osberne. Ingulf says, that Dunstan went to Fleury, to be initiated, p. 29. Dunstan's expositio of the rule of Benedict, with his portrait, is in the British Museum. MSS. Bib. Reg. 10. A. 13.

⁴⁸ That he was born in the year of Athelstan's accession, is declared by Sax. Chron. 111.; Flor. 348.; Hoveden, 422.; Osb. 90.

⁴⁹ MS. Cleop. B. 13.

⁵⁰ MS. Cleop. B. 13.; Adelard; Nero, C. 7.

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HE went home. In the morning he told the king he had seen a vision, in which Saint Peter struck him, and said, "This is your punishment for your refusal, and a token to you not to decline hereafter the primacy of England." The king saw not the art of his friend, but interpreting the vision to his wishes, declared that it foretold he was to be the archbishop of Canterbury.⁵¹

FROM an impartial consideration of all these circumstances, will it be injustice to the memory of Dunstan to infer, that, as by his refusal of the dignity of Winchester, by the communication of this vision, and from its result, he acquired the credit of humility, of a divine communication, and a royal prediction of the highest grandeur to which he could attain, he had these objects in previous contemplation? If not, the coincidence and complexion of the incidents are unlike the usual course of accidental things. It need only be added, that Odo, who then governed the see of Canterbury, was very old.

EDRED, who had been ailing all his reign, felt an alarming crisis to be approaching, and desired his treasures to be collected, that he might dispose of them before he died. Dunstan went to bring those intrusted to him. Edred expired before he returned; and the monk was

⁵¹ Osberne, 103. Adelard.

either credulous or bold enough to assert, and the Anglo-Saxons were weak enough to believe, that on the road an ethereal voice had, in thunder, announced to him the royal demise.⁵²

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THE immature age of Edwin was tempting to a man of ambitious politics. A minor's reign is a favourable opportunity, which has never been neglected by those who covet power. The royal temper once subdued into obedience to any one, the government of England would be in that person's hands. We cannot penetrate into the motives of Dunstan's heart; but if the ordinary spirit of the aspiring statesman prevailed in his breast above the purer objects of the saint, it is not improbable that projects of this sort had impressed his imagination, or why should he have attempted to coerce the king, so early, as the day of his coronation!

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ON this day, Edwin, after the ceremony, quitted the festive table at which the chief nobles and clergy were regaling⁵³, and retired

⁵² MS. Cleop.; Adelard; Nero.

⁵³ The earliest account of this incident is first entitled to notice; it is in the life of Dunstan, Cleop. B. 13. "Post regale sacræ institutionis unguentum repente prosiluit lascivus linguens læta convivia." Malmsbury wishes to intimate, that affairs of business were debating when the king retired, p. 55. But the other authorities agree in stating, that they were at table. Matt. West. says, læta relinquit convivia, p. 369. Osberne has jam pransus; and Wallingford declares that they were at their cups, quibus Angli nimis sunt assueti, p. 542.

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to his apartments. Odo, who saw that the company were displeased, ordered some persons to go and bring back the king to partake of their conviviality.⁵⁴ The persons addressed excused themselves; but at last they chose two who were known to be the most intrepid—Dunstan, and his relation Cynesius, a bishop—who were to bring back the king, either willingly or otherwise, to his deserted seat.⁵⁵

DUNSTAN and his friend, careless of the consequences, penetrated to the king's private apartments. He found him in company with Ethelgiva, or Elgiva, his wife; but who being within the prohibited degrees of affinity, is ranked, by the monastic writers, as his mistress.⁵⁶ The mother of the lady was also pre-

⁵⁴ Et cum vidisset summus pontificum Odo regis petulantiam maxime in consecrationis suæ die omni per gyrum consistenti senatui displicere, ait coepiscopis suis et cæteris principibus. "Eant quæso quilibet ex vobis ad reducendum regem quo sit, ut conducet in hoc regali convivio suorum satellitum jocundus concessor." MSS. Cleop.

⁵⁵ Ad extremum vero eligerunt ex omnibus duos quos animo constantissimos noverant, Dunstanum scilicet Abbatem et Cynesium episcopum ejus consanguineum, ut omnium jussui obtemperantes, regem volentem vel nolentem reducerent ad relictam sedem. MSS. Cleop. On contrasting this account with the chroniclers, some variation of the circumstances occurs, which is a very common accident to a popular story, narrated in a distant age. It seems safest to prefer the earliest account, when it carries the marks of internal probability.

⁵⁶ Malmsbury, 55.; Hist. Rames. 390.; and Wallingford, 543.; speak of her as married to Edwin, but as his relation.

sent.⁵⁷ That in a visit to the beloved of his heart, the king should have lain aside the pomp of majesty, or have caressed her, are circumstances so natural, that we cannot but wonder at the temper which has so emphatically described, that the royal crown was on the ground⁵⁸, or that the king was toying with her when Dunstan

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A charter in the Hist. Abbend. MSS. Claud. c. ix. states the same fact. "Testes autem fuerunt hujus commutationis Ælfgiva regis uxor et Æthelgifa mater ejus, p. 112. Had this charter been even forged, the monks would have taken care that the names appended were correct. The author of the MSS. Cleop. obviously intimates the marriage, though he affixes a doubt whether the wife was the mother or the daughter. His words are, "quo sese vel etiam natam suam sub *conjugali titulo* illi innectendo sociaret." MS. The sentence on the divorce of Edwin in the MSS. Chronicle, quoted in note 63., implies also the fact of the marriage. It seems to me to be sufficiently clear, that when the monkish annalists call the lady his mistress, they do not mean to deny her actual, but her legitimate marriage. Deeming the marriage unlawful from their relationship, they considered her only as his mistress.

⁵⁷ MSS. Cleop. B. 13.; Matt. West. 369.; and Osberne, 105., state this important fact. Their indecent additions of Edwin's behaviour to both mother and daughter in each other's presence are incredible, and, if true, could not at all contribute to the justification of Dunstan's and Odo's conduct. Nor can I believe, with Mr. Lingard, that "moderate readers will feel inclined to applaud the promptitude with which he taught his pupil to respect the laws of decorum," by invading his sovereign's privacy and insulting Elgiva.

⁵⁸ By this contemporary author of the MS. Cleop. the crown is thus described: *Que miro metallo auri vel argenti gemmarum que vario nitore conserta splendebat.*

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entered. He exhorted the king not to disdain to be present among his nobles at the festivities of the day.⁵⁹

WHETHER Edwin disliked the drunkenness of an Anglo-Saxon festival, or whether he preferred the society of his Elgiva, it must be admitted that his retirement was indecorous according to the customs of the age. That Dunstan, as the ambassador of the nobles, should solicit the king's return, was not improper, though it seems rather a forward and disrespectful action to have forced himself into his private apartments. But with the delivery of their message, his commission must have terminated; and, on the king's refusal, it was his duty to have retired. As an ecclesiastic, he should not have compelled him to a scene of inebriety; as a subject, it was treasonable to offer violence to his prince.

BUT Dunstan chose to forget both Edwin's rights as a man, and his dignity as a sovereign. As if he had embraced the opportunity of breaking the royal spirit of independence, by a violent insult, he poured out his invectives against the ladies; and because the king would not leave his seat, he pulled him from it; he forced the diadem on his head, and indecently dragged him to the riotous hall.⁶⁰ To the

⁵⁹ Et ne spernas optimatum tuorum lætis interesse convivis. MSS. Cleop.

⁶⁰ At Dunstanus primum increpitans mulierum ineptias

most private individual this insolence would have been unauthorised. To his sovereign, just consecrated, it was unpardonable. Elgiva reproached the monk for intruding so daringly on the king's retirement ⁶¹; and Dunstan, after the festival, thought proper to return to his abbey.

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DUNSTAN had acted impetuously, but not with judgment. The king was not a sickly Edred. He displayed a spirit of independence and generous feeling, on which Dunstan had not calculated. Wounded in every sentiment of becoming pride and kingly honour, Edwin was alive only to his resentment. He deprived Dunstan of his honours and wealth, and condemned him to banishment. Dunstan fled before the increasing storm; and so severe was the royal indignation, that the monk was scarcely three miles from the shore, on his voyage to Flanders, when messengers reached it, who, it

mane sua dum nollet exurgere, extraxit eum de mæchali genearum occubitu, imposito que diademate, duxit eum secum licet vi a mulieribus raptum ad regale consortium. MS. Cleop.; Malmsbury, 55.; Osberne, 105.; Wallingford, 542.; and Matt. West. 370., state the violence strongly.

⁶¹ MSS. Cleop. This author, and Adelard, Nero, C. 7., politely attach to the lady's name such epithets, as *impudens virago*, *Jezebel*, &c. Osberne uses the delicate phrase of, *nefandæ meretricis*, and sagaciously informs us, that the devil was her tutor, "*Mulieris animum instigat Diabolus*," p. 105.

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was said, would have deprived him of sight, if he had been found in the country.⁶²

It was unfortunate for Edwin, that he suffered his angry passions to be his counsellors. When Dunstan presumed to dictate insultingly to his sovereign, he was not the mere abbot of a distant monastery; he was not an insulated individual, whom the arm of justice could safely reach; he was enshrined in the prejudices of the people; he had the friendship of Turketul, the venerable chancellor, whose fame had become more sacred by his retreat to Croyland; and he was supported by Odo, the primate of England. It was also probable, that most of the clergy and nobles, who had feasted on the coronation, conceived themselves bound to protect him, as his punishment arose from executing, however offensively, their commission.

THE detail of the conspiracy against Edwin is not stated, but some of the operations of Odo, whose fierce temper made him among the most prominent in avenging his friend, have been noticed. He divorced the king from his wife, on the plea of their kinship.⁶³ So powerful was his

⁶² MS. Cleop. Edwin drove the Benedictine monks, introduced by Dunstan, from the two monasteries of Glastonbury and Abbingdon. The loose language of Osberne implies, that many monasteries were put down; but Wharton, on the authority of John of Tinmouth and Wolstan, judiciously reduces the many to these two.

⁶³ The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4., has a paragraph on Edwin's divorce, which is not in the printed one: "958,

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party, that soldiers were sent to the palace to seize the queen: she was taken violently from it; her face was branded with red-hot iron, and she was banished to Ireland.⁶⁴ What duty of an archbishop could dictate this conduct? It is not denied by the old chroniclers, that Odo was active in those measures; why else is the passage added immediately after the murder, stating his being the inflexible enemy of all vice? Elgiva found no charms in her exile, and, nature healing her wounds, she returned to Gloucester in all her beauty.⁶⁵ She was pursued and seized, and the nerves and muscles of her legs were divided, that she might wander from the vengeance of her enemies no more!⁶⁶ But extreme cruelty cannot long retain its victim. Her sufferings at last terminated. Death released her from her murderers, whom no beauty could interest, no sympathy assuage.

on thýrrum geape Oða arcebiſcop to twæmbe Eaðri cýning 7
Ælſýfe for thæm the hi wæron to geſýbbe."

⁶⁴ Missis militibus, a curia regis in qua mansitabat, violenter adduxit et eam in facie deturpatam ac candenti ferro denotatam perpetua in Hiberniam exilii relegatione detrusit. Osberne, 84.

⁶⁵ Quæ tamen cum nonnullum temporis intervallum jam obducta in cicatricem corporis forma sed adhuc hiant impudicæ mentis deformitate, relicta Hibernia, Angliam rediit et Glocestram cæcati cordis obscuritate imbuta pervenit. Osberne, 84.

⁶⁶ Ubi ab hominibus *servis Dei* comprehensa, et ne meretricio more ulterius vaga discurreret, subnervata, post dies aliquot mala morte præsentis vitæ sublata est. Osberne, 84.

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To reflect that men have connected piety with these horrors; and that their authors or abettors perpetrated them under His sacred name, whose creation displays goodness ever flowing, and whose religion enjoins philanthropy the most benign, is to feel human nature in all its depravity and madness. They may have been imitated. Marats and Robespierres may have even exceeded them in atrocity; but the agents of cruelty, under whatever garb, whatever system, or whatever pretexts, are the enemies of mankind, and will never be remembered, unless to be abhorred.

THE remainder of Edwin's reign is not distinctly narrated. But the main results are clear. The Mercians and Northumbrians rebelled against him, drove him beyond the Thames, and appointed Edgar, his brother, a boy but thirteen years of age, to govern them in his stead. Dunstan was immediately afterwards recalled with honour.

IT is probable that the popularity of the Benedictine reformation, of which Dunstan had made himself both the champion and the martyr, was the great engine by which Edwin was oppressed. At length the kingdom was divided between him and Edgar: the Thames was made the bounding line. Edwin retained only the southern provinces of England, and but for a short interval. Three years after the rebellion of his subjects, his death occurred. One author

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even states, that he was assassinated.⁶⁷ If from the want of fuller evidence we hesitate at believing this, we must at least admit the affecting account, that his spirit was so wounded by his persecutions, that, unable to endure unmerited odium, deprivation of power, a brother's rebellion, and the murder of his beloved wife, he sunk pining into death, before he had reached the full age of manhood.⁶⁸

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THE monks, with indefinite phrase, declaim against Edwin as an unworthy voluptuary. But they have judged him, not impartially as between man and man, but with a professional antipathy from his opposition to Dunstan. Less prejudiced annalists state that he was an amiable prince, whose conduct gave the promise of an honourable reign.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ I derive the knowledge of this new and probable fact from the express assertion of an old MS. Chronicle in the Cotton Library, the author of which was no friend to the king. Yet he says, *Rex West Saxonum Edwinus, in pago Gloucestrensi interfectus fuit. Nero, A. 6. p. 9.* I never met with any other authority which so explicitly affirmed the fact. But yet the expressions of the MS. Cleop. B. 13. rather countenance it. This says, "*Interea germanus ejusdem Eadgari qui justa Dei sui judicia deviando dereliquit novissimum flatum misera morte exspiravit.*" Osberne comes near this: "*Edwyo inquam rege regno pro suis criminibus eliminato et misera morte damnato,*" p. 84. The Hist. Rames. implies a violent death: "*Fatali sorte sublato,*" p. 393.

⁶⁸ *Pro dolore tanti infortunii usque ad mortem infirmatus.* Ingulf, 41. *Qua percussus injuria vivendi finem fecit.* Malmsb. 55.

⁶⁹ The simple epithet of the ancient Ethelwerd is pecu-

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HIS youth was the source of his calamities ; a king of sixteen was incompetent to wage a war of policy and popularity with the hoary advocates of a new system, whose fanaticism envenomed their hostility ; whose affiliation and credit multiplied their power. The opinions of a calumniated and untried youth had no weight with the nation, in opposition to all that they revered and obeyed. Had he complied a while with the imperious necessity, and waited till, by manly prudence, he had acquired character, convinced the people of his good qualities, enforced habits of respect, and created friends capable of defending him, his ambitious dictators would have been baffled and humiliated.

HIS catastrophe was a misfortune both to England and Europe. It made the enmity of the ecclesiastical power an object of terror. It exhibited a precedent of a king insulted, injured, persecuted, and dethroned by the agency or effects of sacerdotal enmity ; and as his suc-

liarily forcible : “ Tenuit namque quadrennio per regnum amandus, p. 849. Huntingdon had also spirit enough to declare that Edwin, “ *Non illaudabiliter regni infulam tenuit,*” p. 356. He adds, that as, “ in principio regnum ejus decen-tissime floreret, prospera et lætabunda exordia mors imma-tura perrupit.” Ibid. To the same purport, and with an imitation of phrase, Oxenedes says, “ Cum in principio regni sui omnia prospera et lætabunda florerent exordia.” MSS. Cotton Lib. Nero, D. 2. p. 215.—Edwin, from his extreme beauty, obtained the name Πανκαλόν, or All Fair. Ethelw. 849.

cessor obeyed the dictates or favoured the plans of the monastic leaders, it must have given a consequence to their future influence, which occasionally subjected even courts to their control.

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The Reign of EDGAR.

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EDGAR, at the age of sixteen, succeeded to all the Anglo-Saxon dominion. He has been much extolled, but he was rather the king of a prosperous nation in a fortunate æra, than a great prince himself. His actions display a character ambiguous and mixed. His policy sometimes breathes a liberal and enlarged spirit. At other periods he was mean, arrogant, and vicious; and the hyperboles of praise, by which monastic gratitude has emblazoned him, are as questionable as to their truth, as they are repugnant to common sense and good 'taste. On the whole, if we recollect what he inherited, we must say that it was the fortuitous chronology of his existence, rather than his own bravery and wisdom, which has adorned his name with a celebrity, that in the pages of fanaticism even obscures, by its excess, those illustrious characters from whose exertions his empire had arisen.²

¹ For instance. *Eo namque regnante sol videbatur esse serenior, maris unda pacatior, terra fœcundior, et totius regni facies abundantior, decore venustior.* Ethelr. Abb. Riev. 359.

² Malmsbury is not content with saying once, that nullus

OBTRUDED unjustly upon a brother's throne by vindictive partisans, his reign became their reign rather than his own : and the great object of the policy of the new government was to convert the clergy into monks, and to fill the nation with Benedictine institutions! The patrons of the measure may have intended the moral improvement of the country, and it may have raised a superior description of ecclesiastics in the nation ; but their means were violent and their conduct unjust to the parochial clergy.

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DUNSTAN was made bishop of Worcester, and afterwards of London.³ His acquisition of metropolitan honours was at first checked. Odo had died before Edwin⁴; and this indignant king appointed another bishop to succeed him. But the policy of the Roman pontiffs had established a custom, that all metropolitans should visit Rome to receive there the pallium, the little ornament on their shoulders, which gave and announced their dignity. In crossing the Alps, the archbishop nominated by Edwin perished

enim unquam regum Anglorum potuit certare laudibus Edgari, 3 Gale, 319.; but in another place he deliberately affirms, that nullum nec ejus nec superioris ætatis regem in Anglia recto et æquilubri judicio Edgaro comparandum. De Gest. Reg. 60. Was not Alfred, in just and equal judgment, to be compared with Edgar?

³ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osb. 108. He seems to have held both sees at the same time.

⁴ Odo died 958. Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355.

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amid the snow.⁵ Another was appointed in his stead. But Edgar now reigned, and it was discovered that the new dignitary was a man of mild, modest, humble, and benign ⁶ temper. The expected consequence occurred: Byrhtelm was compelled to abdicate his promotion, and to retire to his former see. Dunstan was appointed the primate of the Anglo-Saxons ⁷, and, in 960, he hastened to Rome.⁸ He received the completing honour from the hands of the ambitious and unprincipled John the Twelfth.⁹

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THE coadjutors of Dunstan in effecting his ecclesiastical reformation were Oswald and Ethelwold. Oswald, a Dane by birth, and a kinsman of Odo, who had educated him, had received the habit at Fleury.¹⁰ Dunstan represented him to the king as a meek and humble monk, well worthy of the bishopric of Worcester.¹¹ The king, though he had allowed meekness and humility to degrade a metropolitan, pliantly admitted them to be the proper virtues of a bishop, and gave to Oswald the

⁵ MSS. Cleop. B. 13. So Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355.

⁶ MSS. Cleop. So Matt. West. 371., who seems often to copy this author.

⁷ Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355. Such was his cupidity of power, that he held also the see of Rochester. Osb. 110.

⁸ Matt. West. 370. Flor. 356.

⁹ That John XII. ruled at this period, see Dupin, tenth century, p. 10.

¹⁰ Hist. Rames. 391.

¹¹ Flor. Wig. 356.

honour requested. Oswald was, however, not more attached to the gentle virtues than Dunstan, or at least did not allow them to interrupt the prosecution of his patron's plans.

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THREE years afterwards, Dunstan raised to the see of Winchester Ethelwold, abbot of Abingdon, who had been bred up by ¹² himself: Ethelwold; who adopted the feelings of Dunstan and enforced his plans, was decided and impetuous in prosecuting the monastic reformation of the clergy. He may have conscientiously believed this to have been his duty; but it was carried into effect with a tyrannical severity: and if a renovation of ecclesiastical piety was its object, its success in this point was of small duration; for within a century after this Benedictine reformation, the manners of the clergy are represented as unfavourably as at its commencement. The more pleasing part of Ethelwold's character was his attention to the literary education of the youth at Winchester.¹³ These three the king made his counsellors and friends.

¹² Flor. 357. So Adelard says, "Beato igitur Athelwoldo a se educato." MS. Nero, C. 7. p. 75. Edgar made Dunstan, Oswald, and Ethelwold his counsellors and friends. See Edgar's charter, Dugdale, 140.

¹³ Wolstan says of him, "It was always delightful to him to teach children and youth, and to construe Latin books to them in English, and explain to them the rules of grammar and Latin versification, and to exhort them to better things by his pleasant conversations. Hence many of his disciples became priests, abbots, bishops, and even archbishops." Wolst. Vit. Ethelwold.

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THE schemes of Dunstan to perpetuate his power and popularity cannot at this distant period be detailed, but the nature of them may be conjectured by one faculty which he claimed, and which has been transmitted to us from his own authority. The best part of Dunstan's character was his taste for knowledge and the civilising arts. The questionable features are those of his politics, and real or pretended enthusiasm. The Catholic hierarchy may accredit his supernatural gifts, but our sober reason cannot read but with surprise, that he claimed the power of conversing with the spiritual world. "I can relate one thing from himself," says his biographer, "that though he lived confined by a veil of flesh, yet whether awake or asleep, he was always abiding with the powers 'above.'" Hence he learnt many heavenly songs. A particular instance is added of a vision, which announces such extraordinary pretensions in Dunstan, that if it had not come from his friend and contemporary, we might disbelieve the possibility that such presumption could have either occurred or been countenanced.

IN this vision, he declared he saw his own mother married to the venerated Saviour of the

¹⁴ Unum autem *ex ipso* me posse referre profiteor quod quamvis hic carneo septus velamine deguisset in imis mente tamen sive vigilaret sive somno detentus quiescerat semper manebat in superis. MS. Cleop. B. 13. p. 81.

Christian world; with every nuptial ¹⁵ pomp. CHAP.
Amid the singing, a heavenly youth asked Dun- VI.
stan, why he did not join in the rejoicings of so Edgar.
great a marriage for his mother; and, on his
mentioning his ignorance, taught him a song.¹⁶ 960.

DUNSTAN promulgated this by summoning a monk to attend him on his pretended waking, who, from his dictation, committed the song to writing. All the monks, subject to him, were commanded in the morning to learn and to sing it, while Dunstan shouted his protestations of the truth of the vision.¹⁷

To the credulous, the assertion of Dunstan was sufficient evidence of this impious story. The more investigating were silenced by attempts to allegorise it. The mother so married, was Dunstan's church in its new ¹⁸ reformation. Thus, whether it was believed literally, or interpreted allegorically, Dunstan derived from it the benefit he wished. It would seem that many thought him mad; but as his madness was systematical, persevering, and popular, it was more generally believed to be prophetic intuition.¹⁹

¹⁵ MS. Cleop.; and see Osberne, 114.; and Eadmer Vit. Dunst. 217.

¹⁶ MSS. Cleop.

¹⁷ Sed continuo jussit eam litterarum in memoria priusque oblivioni daretur conscribere et conscriptam cuidam monacho tam recentem discere, &c. &c. MSS. Cleop.

¹⁸ MSS. Cleop.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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VI.

Edgar.

960.

THE first object of Dunstan was to expel the relaxed ecclesiastics from the monasteries, to diffuse every where the Benedictine rule, and to give them the predominance in the estimation of the nation.

BUT Edgar did not leave his Benedictine friends to attack the existing clergy by their own influence and means of aggression. He degraded majesty so far as to become himself the persecuting tool of Dunstan. He himself assumed the sword against a portion of his subjects²⁰, who were respectable from their profession, and who could have no protection, but in the popular favour, or in his justice.

969.

AT a public synod, convened to propagate the Benedictine revolution, Edgar delivered a speech²¹ for the party he espoused. In consequence of which, the clergy experienced a general persecution, and the monks were every where diffused with honour.²² Edgar took such pride in his Benedictine scheme, that, in 964, he boasted of having made forty-seven mo-

²⁰ In his charter to the monastery at Hyde, in the year 966, he says, "*Vitiorum cuneos canonicorum e diversis nostri regiminis Cænobiis Christi vicarius eliminavi.*" Spelman Concil. 438. In the sixteenth article the monks are engaged to defend him from devils, and in the seventeenth he contracts to defend them from men. Ib. 440.

²¹ See it in Ethelred, p. 360.

²² See Spelman's Concilia, 479.; Ingulf, 45.; Osborne, 111.; Eadmer, 219.; Hoveden, 425.; Matt. West. 372. 374.; and Hist. Rames. 393, 394. 400.

nasteries, and declared his intentions to increase them to fifty.²³

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EDGAR talks proudly, in one of his charters, that he had subdued all the islands of the ocean, with their ferocious kings, as far as Norway, and the greatest part of Ireland, with its most noble city, Dublin.²⁴ No wars, however, have been particularised to have been waged by him but his ecclesiastical ones, except an invasion of Wales.²⁵

To complete the subjugation of Northumbria, he convoked the barons, and divided the province into two counties. The Tees was the river of separation. The districts beyond its southern bank to the Humber were intrusted to Oslach. From the northern bank to Mereforth, in the maritime part of Deira, the earl Eadulf governed.²⁶

It is stated, that with a great fleet Edgar sailed to Chester on the Dee, and that eight kings, Kenneth king of Scotland, Malcolm of Cumbria, Macchus of Anglesey and the²⁷ Isles,

973.

²³ See Dugdale, Monast. i. p. 140.

²⁴ *Mihi autem concessit propitia divinitas cum Anglorum imperio omnia regna insularum oceani cum suis ferocissimis regibus usque Norregiam maximam que partem Hiberniæ cum sua nobilissima civitate Dublinia Anglorum regno subjugare.* 1 Dugdale, 140.

²⁵ Caradoc mentions this in 965, and says, it produced the Welsh tribute of 300 wolves, p. 56.

²⁶ Wallingford, 544.

²⁷ Matt. West. 375. so entitles him, "Macone rege Monæ et plurimarum insularum." Malmsbury calls him Archipi-

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three kings of Wales, and two others ²⁸, repaired thither at his command, to do him homage. He was not satisfied with this confession of his power; his puerile vanity demanded a more painful sacrifice; he ascended a large vessel with his nobles and officers; and he stationed himself at the helm, while the eight kings, who had come to do him honour, were compelled to take the seats of the watermen, and to row him down the Dee. ²⁹ Such actions are not the

rata, p. 56. In 971, he witnessed one of Edgar's charters, with that epithet added to his signature. Spelman, 486. Who this Macchus was we learn from the Welsh Chronicle, often already quoted. This says 969, "y diffeithwyd Penn Mon y gan y Paganyeit a Mact' vab Harald." 'The promontory of Anglesey was ravaged by the Pagans under Mactus the son of Harald.' In 970, he made it tributary. MS. Cleop. B. 5. On referring to Adam Bremensis, p. 25. we find two lines which express that Harald Blaaland, king of Denmark, sent his son Hring to England, who having conquered the island, was betrayed in Northumbria. So the Icelandic fragment in Langbeck, ii. p. 148. I have already, in p. 375., stated from Snorre, the death of Eric, son of Harald Harfragre, whom Langbeck wishes to make this Hring or Hringr, son of the Danish king. I think Snorre is correct, and that Mactus, the son of Harald, was the son of Harald Blaaland the Dane; not of Harfragre the Norwegian. In 946, there was another Maccus, son of Eric. See before, p. 376. The Danish Maccus did homage to Edgar. Wallingford spells his name Oriccus, p. 545., which comes nearer to Hring or Hringr.

²⁸ Matt. West. styles these, Jacobo rege Galwalliæ et Jukil Westmaræ, p. 375.

²⁹ Malmsb. 56. Mailros, 150. Hoveden, 426. Sim. Dun. 159. Al. Bev. 112. Flor. 359. Nothing can more strongly display Edgar's vanity than the pompous and boast-

evidences of true greatness, and never confer a lasting dignity.

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EDGAR was as tyrannical in the indulgence of his other passions: he had sent one of his earls, named Athelwold, on a visit to Ordgar, earl of Devonshire, to examine if the beauty of his daughter, Elfrida, was as great as fame reported. Athelwold saw her, and falsified his trust. He reported her unfavourably to the king, then courted her for himself, and married her.

COURTIERS are busy to supplant, and Edgar soon heard the truth. He dissembled his anger, and announced to Athelwold his intention to see the lady. Alarmed at his danger, the nobleman entreated his wife to deform herself; but Elfrida was weary of domestic privacy, and, on the day of the royal visit, she added every charm of art to give brilliancy to her beauty. She excited Edgar's passions. He caused Athelwold to be assassinated in a wood, and then married Elfrida.³⁰

AT another time he had the brutality to violate a lady of noble birth, who used a nun's veil as an expected, but an unavailing protection.³¹

ful titles which he assumes in his charters. They sometimes run to the length of fifteen or eighteen lines. How different from Alfred's *Ego occidentalium Saxonum Rex*!

³⁰ Malmsb. 59. Bromton gives the incident more in detail, 865, 866.

³¹ Malmsb. 60. This was in his first wife's time. Eadmer Vit. Dunst. 219.

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A THIRD incident of his contempt for the welfare of others, when his own gratification was in question, has been recorded. Visiting at Andover, he commanded a nobleman to bring him his daughter, whose person had been praised to him, but the mother of the young lady sent her attendant to personate her daughter.³² For these actions Dunstan imposed only trifling penances on Edgar.³³

YET amid these defects, some traits of an enlarged and liberal policy appear, which reflect credit on Edgar or his ministers. The most important of these was his patronage of foreigners and trade. People from Saxony, Flanders, and Denmark, frequently came to him³⁴; whom he received so well as to excite a censure from one monkish chronicler, that he loved them too much³⁵, and from another, that

³² Malmsb. 60. This author's expressions, *nam cæteras infamias—magis resperserunt cantilenæ*, p. 56., imply, that the Anglo-Saxon poets made Edgar's dissolute conduct the subject of their poetry.

³³ As occasional fasting, and not to wear his crown for seven years. Malmsb. 60. Osb. 111. One part of the penance was artfully chosen to promote the monk's purposes. The king was to lavish his treasures upon a nunnery, to expel the clergy with new vigour, and to introduce monks. Osb.

³⁴ Malmsb. 56. The Welsh Chronicle, MS. Cleop. B. 5. says: "*Canys canneat agavas gwyr Denmarc ar drigaw yn yr ynys honn tra vynnnynt y gan Edgar vrenhin Lloegyr.*"—Because to the men of Denmark leave was granted by Edgar king of England, on their request, to dwell in this island.

³⁵ *Extraneos huc adductos plus æquo diligens.* Hunt. 356.

they injured his people by the vices they imported.³⁶ He showed his care of trade by his exemplary punishment of the people of Thanet, who had seized and plundered some merchants coming from York.³⁷ His commuting the tribute from Wales into three hundred wolves' heads³⁸, in order to extirpate these animals from the country, was a scheme of sound wisdom and generous policy. His reformation of his coin was also intelligent. It had become so diminished in weight, by the fraud of clipping, that the actual value was very inferior to the nominal; he therefore had new coins made all over England.³⁹

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³⁶ Malmsbury says: "A Saxonibus animorum inconditam ferocitatem, a Flandritis corporum enervem mollitiem, a Danis potationem discerent. Homines ante hæc in talibus integri et naturali simplicitate sua defensare, aliena non mirari," p. 56. The Welsh Chronicle adds to the last passage quoted, another, which states, that the Danes became so numerous, that they were in every city and town in England; that they gave themselves up to such drinking and idolatry, that they could not be governed; and that this occasioned nails to be put in their cups, to mark the quantity they were to drink. MS. Cleop. B. 5. Malmsbury says of Dunstan, that he caused silver or gold nails to be put into the drinking vessels, to prevent drunkenness and quarrels, p. 56.

³⁷ Matt. West. 374.

³⁸ Malmsbury says, the tribute ceased on the fourth year, for want of wolves, p. 59.

³⁹ Matt. West. 375. Dunstan may have influenced him in this law; for it is stated in his life, that finding three coiners of false money not punished on the appointed day, because it was Whitsunday, he ordered the day not to be regarded; "for," said he, "coiners are thieves, and I know

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HE is said to have stationed three fleets of 1200 ships each on the east, west, and south coasts of the island, for the defence of the kingdom.⁴⁰ This, however, looks more like idle parade than public utility; for England was threatened with no foreign hostility in his reign, and one-third of the number would have guarded the coast. There was more true glory obtained by his practice, every spring and winter, of riding through his provinces, to examine the conduct of the powerful, to protect the weak, and to punish every violation of⁴¹ law. This attention to the wants and relief of his people merits our applause, and whether Dunstan's solicitude for popularity⁴², or the king's noble feelings occasioned the custom, it ought not to be mentioned without high praise. His vigilant police freed the kingdom from robbers.⁴³

EDGAR was generous to his friends. To

of no thieves more harmful. They disturb the country, and injure both rich and poor." Eadmer, p. 216.

⁴⁰ Mailros, 150. Matt. West. makes 4800 ships, by adding a Northern fleet. Perhaps either number is an exaggeration. Malmsbury says, that every Easter they sailed round the island, p. 59.

⁴¹ Malmsb. 59. Mailros, 150. Matt. West. 375.

⁴² After Dunstan had become a metropolitan, he hastened to travel through every city in the kingdom, to preach to it; and such was his acuteness and eloquence, says his biographer, that nothing could be wiser, or more pleasant. Osberne, 110.

⁴³ Malmsb. 59.

Kenneth of Scotland, who visited him, he not only gave the county of Louth, but one hundred ounces of pure gold, many silken ornaments, and rings, with precious stones.⁴⁴

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THE person of Edgar was small and thin; and Kenneth one day remarked, that it was wonderful that so many provinces should obey a man so insignificant. These words were carried to the king. He led Kenneth apart into a wood, and bad him take one of two swords which he produced. "Our arms shall decide which ought to obey the other; for it will be base to have asserted that at a feast, which you cannot support with your sword." Kenneth, confused, recollected his hasty remark, and apologised for it as a joke.⁴⁵ There is such an energy and a magnanimity in this incident, that if Edgar had attained his power at a later age, or had possessed better counsellors, he might have displayed a nobler character.

EDGAR was twice married. By his first wife, Elfreda the Fair, daughter of Ordmer, he had Edward, his successor, and a daughter, who became a nun. Elfrida, whom he had made the widow of Athelwold⁴⁶, that had deceived him,

⁴⁴ Matt. West. says, Louth was given on condition that Kenneth should come every year to Edgar's principal feasts. The king gave him several houses for his entertainment during his journey.

⁴⁵ Malmsb. 59.

⁴⁶ The Saxon Chron. MS. Tib. B. 4. dates Edgar's marriage with Elfrida in 965.

BOOK bore him two sons; Edmund, who died before
VI. him; and Ethelred, who also obtained the
Edgar. crown.

975. EDGAR's reign has been celebrated as the most glorious of all the Anglo-Saxon kings. No other sovereign indeed converted his prosperity into such personal pomp; but no other sovereign was more degraded in his posterity. With his short life, for he died at thirty-two, the gaudy pageantry ceased; and all the dominion in which he had so ostentatiously exulted, vanished from his children's grasp. His eldest son perished by the scheme of his beloved Elfrida; his youngest reigned only to show, that one weak reign is sufficient to ruin, even a brave and great people.

EDGAR made kings his watermen. The son of his love five times bought his kingdom from Danish rovers, was the fool of traitors, and surrendered his throne to a foreign invader. Of Edgar's grandsons, one perished violently soon after his accession. The other was the last of his race who ruled the Anglo-Saxon nation.

CHAP. VII.

EDWARD *the Martyr*, or EDWARD *the Second of the ANGLO-SAXON Kings*.

DUNSTAN had used the power of Edgar to plant England with the new monks, and to exclude from their seats the ancient clergy; but he had not reconciled all the nation to the severity of the measure, or to his own administration; for on Edgar's death an attempt was made to humble his power, and to restore the clergy. As Edward appeared subservient to the views of Dunstan, his accession was disputed. Some chose him, and others 'Ethelred. But Edward had been named by his father as successor, and Dunstan took the shortest road to his object. He and Oswald assembled their ecclesiastical friends and some Dukes, and crowned Edward.² Edward, like all the kings since Athelstan, was very young at his accession.

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the
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THE quarrel between the two systems grew more vehement. The governor of Mercia

¹ Flor. Wig. 361. Mailros, 151.

² Hist. Rames. 413. Mailros, 151. Eadmer, Vit. D. 220.

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turned out all the monks.³ The governor of East Anglia supported them.⁴ Many tumults ensued.⁵ The clergy got hold of the monastic possessions, which they distributed to the governors in return for their protection.⁶

ELFRIDA opposed Dunstan. She joined the party of the clergy, and endeavoured to bias the minds of the great in favour of her son Ethelred.

THOUGH Dunstan had got Edward crowned, he could not recover the alienated minds of the nobility. He attempted to govern them by the influence of superstition. He forcibly expelled the clergy, who had been reinstated; and to quiet the discontents at his violence, he convened a synod at Winchester. While the opinions were forming, and the assembly expected his answer to a peculiar appeal which had been made to him, the crucifix in the wall became vocal. It commended the former proceedings: it forbade a change. "What wish ye more?" exclaimed Dunstan, immediately; "the divine voice determines the affair."⁷

³ Ingulf, 54. Malmsb. 61.

⁴ Hist. Rames. 412.

⁵ Multus inde tumultus in omni angulo Angliæ factus est. Ingulf, 54.

⁶ Ingulf, 54. One author says, he cannot express the sufferings of the monks. Hist. Rames. 412.

⁷ Malmsb. 61. Bromton, 870. Gervase, 1647. Osberne, 112. Eadmer, 219. The two latter place it under Edgar's reign, which is less probable than the chronology of the

THIS artifice, for, unless we believe it to have been a miracle, no other name can be given to it, did not fully succeed. It was followed by another event, which, taken in conjunction with the preceding, leads the impartial mind to the strongest suspicion of its having been a scheme of the most atrocious nature. The candid historian will always regret when the nature of the incidents compel him to infer bad motives. But some facts justify the imputation; and the following events, unless extreme charity can believe them to have been accidental, or credulity can suppose them to have been miraculous, announce premeditated plans of the most flagitious nature. A council of the nobles was summoned at Calne. It was managed that the king should be absent, on account of his age. While the senators of England were conversing unsuspectingly on the question then agitated, and were reproaching Dunstan, he gave a short reply, which ended with these remarkable words: "I confess that I am unwilling to be overcome. I

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others, because Edgar's attachment to Dunstan and power, made such aids useless. Whatever affects the character of Dunstan, Mr. Lingard wishes to believe a mere popular tale. If Dunstan's enemies had written his life, Mr. Lingard's incredulity would be a fair exertion of cautious though arbitrary pyrrhonism. But all that we know of Dunstan comes from his friends and panegyrists. It is our moral sympathies that have improved, not our historical evidence that has diminished.

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commit the cause of the church to the decision of Christ."

As these words, which of themselves imply all that we would impute, were uttered, the floor and its beams and rafters gave way, and precipitated the company with the ruins to the earth below. The seat of Dunstan only was unmoved. Many of the nobles were killed upon the spot; the others were grievously hurt by wounds, which kept them long confined.⁸ If no other achievement had revealed Dunstan's character, would not this be sufficient to startle the unprejudiced reader into a doubt of its sanctity? It was followed by another circumstance, which leaves us no alternative between the supposition of a purposed falsehood or an unworthy miracle.

ON the death of his friend and pupil Athelwold, the see of Winchester became vacant. As, from the avowed dissatisfaction of the nobles, Dunstan's power was insecure, it became expedient that he should guard it by filling every high office with his friends. He fixed upon Elphegus as the successor, and, to abolish all opposition, he boldly declared, that Saint Andrew had appeared to him, and commanded him to consecrate Elphegus to the vacant see.⁹

⁸ Malmsb. 61. Flor. Wig. 361. Sim. Dun. 160.

⁹ Osberne, 114. The history of Dunstan is remarkably certain; for even the facts against him are taken from his friends and encomiasts.

SUCH proceedings at last taught others to fight him with the weapons of crime. The subjection of Edward to his will gave a perpetuity to his power; but there was a person existing as ambitious as himself, and indifferent to the means of gratifying that ambition. This was Elfrida. I know not whether we can credit all the wickedness attributed to her. It is stated in the records of the abbey of Ely, that its first abbot, Brithonod, was seen by Elfrida in the New Forest. He went to the royal court on the business of his church, and at his departure took leave also of her. She desired a private conversation with him on affairs of conscience, and in the interview she acted the wife of Potiphar. The abbot emulated the virtue of Joseph; and the disappointed Elfrida procured his assassination. The power of the queen-dowager compelled his monastery to indulge their suspicions in silence; but in her days of penitence she acknowledged the crime.¹⁰

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It is also declared of Elfrida, that Edward gave her all Dorsetshire as a dower, with a royal dignity annexed to it.¹¹

THE state of the kingdom gave power to her malice. However the proceedings at Calne may have affected the credulous people, the surviving sufferers and their friends could hardly have

¹⁰ This incident has escaped the notice of our historians. It is in the *Historia Eliensis*. 3 Gale, 491, 492.

¹¹ Wallingford, 545.

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been deceived: and if they believed the catastrophe to have been the effect of design, we may assume that they meditated to avenge it on Dunstan. But he was protected by the favour of his sovereign; Edward therefore became the first object of attack. A combination against him was formed; and with no scruples as to the means. It is stated, that Elfrida and some princes conspired together to dethrone Edward in favour of Ethelred, and that the death of the king was the crime devised for the accomplishment of their purpose. The unsuspecting king facilitated the execution of the guilty plot. He was hunting in Dorsetshire, near Wareham, a few miles from which stood Corfe Castle, the residence of Elfrida and her son. His companions were dispersed in pursuit of the game, and, in the course of the sport, Edward beheld the conspicuous walls of the castle.¹² He rode thither to visit Ethelred and his mother. On the tidings of his arrival, she hastily settled her plan. She went out and received him with hypocritical kindness, and invited him in. The king declined to alight; but desired some refreshment, and requested to see his brother. A cup of drink was brought to him, but while he was raising it to his lips, a wretch, stealing behind, stabbed him in the back. Feeling the wound, he spurred his horse to escape the assassin, but the blow had been

¹² The interesting ruins of Corfe Castle still remain.

too successful : he fell from his seat ; his feet hung in the stirrups, and the frightened steed dragged his expiring lord over the rugged way. His friends traced him by his blood, and found at last his disfigured corpse. It was burnt and its ashes buried at Wareham.¹³

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¹³ Malmsb. 61. Ingulf, 54. Mailros, 151. The chroniclers say, he was buried ; but Lupus, in his sermon, says, *occisus est et postea combustus*. Hickes's Thes.

CHAP. VIII.

*Review of the State and History of DENMARK
and NORWAY at the Accession of ETHELRED,
and of the last Stage of the Northern Piracy.*

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AS the second year of the reign of Ethelred was distinguished by the re-appearance of those enemies whom the courage and wisdom of Alfred and his successors had subdued or driven from the English coasts, and who now succeeded in obtaining the English crown, it is expedient that we should turn our eyes upon the Baltic, and inquire what nations and what sovereigns possessed at this time the means of such formidable aggressions.

DENMARK.

The state
of Den-
mark.

THE history of Denmark, from the death of Ragnar Lodbrog to the accession of Harald Blaaland, or Blue Tooth, is confused and inaccurate.¹ Harald was the son of Gormo the

¹ The confusion of this part of Danish history was observed and complained of by Adam of Bremen. "Tanti autem reges, immo tyranni Danorum, utrum simul aliqui regnaverunt, an alter post alterum brevi tempore vixit in-

Aged, and Thyra the Saviour of Denmark. He acceded in 936, on his father's demise. He suffered from a calamitous invasion of Jutland by the emperor Otho ², who married Athelstan's sister.

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He built the famous city of Jomsburg ³ near the great Pomeranian lake, made by three rivers in their conflux to the sea. This city became very distinguished for the courage of its inhabitants, their depredations and opulence. ⁴ It was perhaps the only instance in the world of a government of pirates. ⁵ Its first legislator, Palnatoko, enacted it as one of his laws, that no man should live at Jomsburg who breathed a word of fear, or who showed the least apprehension in the most critical danger. ⁶ Their

City of
Jomsburg.

certum est." c. xlv. p. 17. Many chronicles and histories have appeared since Adam's time, but they have only made the confusion of the period more visible to all who collate their accounts.

² To protect Denmark from the Germans, he completed the celebrated trench and wall called Dannewirke. See Snorre's description of it, vol. i. p. 217.; and see Stephanus, 199—201.

³ Saxo, 182.

⁴ See Bartholin, 446.

⁵ Inter omnes vero Vikingos quos historiæ nostræ celebrant famosissimi erant Jomsvikingr dicti qui Julini olim Jomsburg sedem fixam et rempublicam certis ac firmis legibus constitutam habebant. Wormius Mon. Dan. 270.

⁶ Jomsvikingr Saga, c. 14. cited by Bartholin, p. 3. This Saga gives a curious account of the answers of eight men of Jomsburg who were captives, on their being brought out to be slaughtered. Bartholin, 41—51. If they can be credited,

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depredations were conducted on a principle of equality; for all the plunder, whether small or great, was brought to the spear and ⁷ divided. The modern Wollin, which has succeeded the ancient city, is not one-thirtieth part of its size. Ploughs now cut the soil on which splendid buildings stood. It became the emporium of the north. It was the last state of the north which admitted Christianity. All nations but Christians, who were interdicted on pain of death, were allowed to inhabit it, and each people had a separate street. They were idolaters, and for the most part Polygamists.⁸ Their riches at last introduced factions, disorders, and civil fury, till Waldemar took and destroyed it in 1170.⁹

HARALD Blaataud had a successful war with Haco of Norway, but towards the close of his life, the discontent of his subjects¹⁰ enabled his son Svein to commence an unnatural warfare

they evince a horrible fearlessness. They were taken prisoners in a great invasion of Norway by their countrymen. Snorre narrates the aggression, p. 231—240., and gives extracts from the Scallds who mention it.

⁷ Bartholin gives extracts from the Hirdskra and the Jomsvikingr Saga, on this subject, p. 16.

⁸ See the descriptions of Munster and Chrytæus, cited by Stephanus, 197, 198. Chrytæus was so interested by it, as to make a particular survey of its scite and remains.

⁹ The ancient Svenno Aggo thus mentions its fate: "whose walls I Svenno beheld levelled to the ground by the archbishop Absalom," c. iv. p. 51.

¹⁰ Svenno Aggo, p. 51. Saxo, p. 185.

against him.¹¹ Svein required of his father a share of his dominions.¹² This demand being refused, he pretended to be collecting a fleet against the pirates, and with this surprised Harald. The old king fled to Normandy with sixty ships, and the son of Rollo entertained him hospitably, until he prepared a fleet capable of regaining his kingdom.¹³ A reconciliation for a while suspended the immoral war¹⁴, and Harald gratefully returned to Richard of Normandy, the aid which he had received from his father.¹⁵ The conflict was soon renewed between Harald and Svein, whose tutor, Palnatoko, in revenge of an injury¹⁶ which he had endured, stabbed Harald. The wounded king fled to Jomsburg, where he soon died in 985.¹⁷

¹¹ Adam Brem. 25.

¹² Snorre, vol. i. p. 229.

¹³ Will. Gemmet. lib. iii. c. 9. p. 237. Pontanus dates Harald's arrival in Normandy in 943. Hist. Dan. lib. v. p. 135.

¹⁴ Will. Gemmet. lib. iv. c. 9. p. 243. Svenno mentions the agreement, though in his additions to it, I think he confuses several distinct incidents.

¹⁵ Dudo, lib. iii. p. 122. Gemmet. p. 246.

¹⁶ This injury, as related by Saxo, p. 184. is the story of William Tell and Grisler. Toko was a famous archer, and boasted of his skill. Harald bid him with his first arrow, on pain of death, pierce an apple on his son's head. Toko, compelled to obey, exhorted his son not to stir. He took out three arrows. The first was successful. The king inquired why three arrows.—“To have shot you if I had killed my son.” Saxo lived long before William Tell.

¹⁷ Saxo, 186.; and see Ad. Brem. 25., Helmoldus, p. 14., Snorre and 2 Langb. 149. for some variation in the circum-

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Svein's
reign.

SVEIN, who has received the surnames of Otto from the emperor Otho, and Tiugoskegg from the shape of his beard, became now the undisputed master of a throne, which he had so foully earned. His life was romantic; but at a period when the manners of society, viewed with the eye of reason, seem unnatural and distorted, the actions will be often extravagant. He was three times taken prisoner by the Jomsburgers, and was three times redeemed. His last liberation was accomplished by the generosity of that sex, whose pity is never asked in vain; whom nature has made lovely in person, but still more lovely in heart.¹⁸

NEW misfortunes divested the ill-gotten crown of its expected charms. Eric, the prevailing king in Sweden, invaded Scania, and after many battles expelled Svein, and for many years remained the master of the Danish isles.¹⁹

THE exiled Svein fled humbly to Tryggva of Norway, but was disdainfully spurned. England was his next resource, but Ethelred, offended at incursions of the Northmen, with which he had

stances. I take the date from the ancient Icelandic annals. 2 Langb. 189.

¹⁸ On these incidents, see Saxo, 186.; Sveno, 54.; Chron. Erici, 298.; Adam Brem. 26. Saxo and Sveno mention, that in grateful return, the ladies were presented with a law entitling them to a share of their paternal property, from which, till then, they had been excluded.

¹⁹ Ad. Brem. c. lxxii. p. 26. Frag. Isl. 2 Langb. 150. Saxo, 188.

been harassed, would not admit him. He then sailed to Scotland, and there met an asylum, and a hospitable friend.²⁰ He resided there fourteen years.

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ON the death of his enemy he returned to Denmark, but was driven out again by the son of Eric, who at last reinstated him, and gave him Syritha his mother in marriage.²¹ Soon after this period England felt his power.

NORWAY.

HACO the Good was reigning in the time of Athelstan. His character is interesting and great; his hilarity of mind was peculiar; his eloquence, his prudence, and his modesty, were equally distinguished. Peace, with her abundance and felicity, blessed both the agriculturist and the merchant of Norway during his reign, and he was diligent in his legislation. Two laws are particularised which he made, like the Anglo-Saxon kings, with the advice of his wisest men.²² Among others, he provided for the defence of the maritime regions of Norway by a sort of coast militia. The country on the shore, and as far up the river as salmons ascended, he

Haco's
reign.

²⁰ Ad. Brem. p. 27. says, Thruccho of Norway. Saxo, his son Olave, p. 189. Saxo, and Hector Boethius, mention Edward as the English king. This is wrong. Adam is correct in stating Ethelred, who began his reign in 978.

²¹ Adam, p. 28.; and see Saxo, 189.

²² Snorre Hakonar Goda, p. 135.

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divided into provinces, and these into territories, each of which was to be provided with a definite number of war ships, of a stated size. The population of the district was to be always ready to act in these vessels whenever a hostile force drew near.²³ To give celerity to their movement he established a sort of telegraph. On high mountains, piles of wood of the largest trees, to be fired on exigency, were so placed as to be visible from mountain to mountain; by these means in seven days the news was transmitted from one end of Norway to the other.²⁴

HACO retaliated the invasion of the Danes on Vikia, by driving them into Halland and Jutland.²⁵ He passed into Zealand with successful outrage, took eleven Vikingr ships, and obtained great booty from the island; he then turned his conquering arms upon Scania, and even ventured to attack, with equal good fortune, the Swedish province of Gothland. In the following autumn

²³ Snorre Hakonar Goda, p. 146.

²⁴ Ut in montibus excelsis ex ingentibus arboribus pyræ ita struerentur (s. angari) ut ab una pyra ad alteram facilis et liber esset prospectus. Excitatus hoc pacto hostilis irruptionis nuntius, a prima in extremo regni ad meridiem angulo extracta pyra, ad remotissimum boream versus publicorum comitiorum in Halogalandia locum 7 dierum spatio volitasse fertur. Snorre, *ibid.* c. xxi. p. 146.

²⁵ The Scalld Guthormr Sindri records this invasion in his Hakonar drapa. Snono has quoted one of his verses. Saga Hak. c. vi. p. 131.

he returned to Vikia with an immense burthen of booty.²⁶ CHAP.
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HARALD Blaataud, who at this time ruled Denmark, beheld, with unavailing displeasure, the desolating victories of Haco. To humble the Norwegian, he admitted into his kingdom the children of Eric, the expelled king of Norway, whom Haco had succeeded, whom Athelstan had received into Northumbria, and who at last had perished there. Harald gave them possessions, and permitted them to²⁷ pirate. Thus encouraged and supported, the sons of Eric assailed Haco²⁸; but the star of his prosperity still continued to beam.

Haco had long cherished a love for Christianity in secret. When he thought his power consolidated, he sent to England²⁹ for ecclesiastics capable of teaching the religion to the Norwegians. On their arrival he avowed his wishes, and exhorted the nation, in a public assembly, to adopt his faith; but he experienced from the peasantry such a decided opposition, that he was even compelled by them to assist in their idolatrous superstitions.³⁰

TRYGGVI, the son of one of those children of

²⁶ Saga Hak. c. vii. p. 132, 133.

²⁷ Ibid. c. x. p. 134.

²⁸ Ibid. c. xx. p. 145.

²⁹ Missis in Angliam nuntiis, Episcopos aliosque doctores accessivit post quorum in Norwegiam adventum mentem suam aperuit rex Hakonus. Snorre, p. 138.

³⁰ Snorre, 139—143.

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Harald Harfragre, who fell by the hostilities of their brother Eric, so often mentioned in this history, obtained from Hakon the Good some little principalities towards the south of Norway, for which he assisted Hakon against his enemies, the children of Eric.³¹ These restless enemies were frequently assaulting Hakon with various devices, but he reigned prosperously for twenty years.³²

961

At last Harald, the eldest of these sons of Eric, surprised Hakon at a disadvantage. He fought with his usual success, but a dart wounded him under the arm. He retired to his ship; no art could stop the blood, and Hakon the Good sunk gradually into death. Friends and enemies enshrined his memory with a general lamentation. The exclamation was unanimous, that no king, his equal in virtue, would again bless Norway.³³ Eywind the Scald has honoured his memory with an ode, which gives dignity to the character of Norwegian poetry.³⁴ The civilisation of every country has been of such tardy vegetation, that such kings as Hakon must be

³¹ Snorre, 121—135.

³² See one of the schemes to baffle the effect of Hakon's telegraphs. Snorre, 147—152.

³³ Snorre, 155—161. One of his last actions was to request the sons of Eric to spare his friends and relations, p. 160. The Icelandic Annals place his death in 961. 2 Langb. 188.

³⁴ Snorre, 161—165. This fine Runic ode is better known by the name of the Elegy or Eulogium of Hakon.

hailed with blessings, for to them the precious plant owes principally its preservation and progress, during these dark and stormy ages.

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ON Hakon's death the sons of Eric predominated in Norway, and their mother Gunilda shared in the government; but they held at first only the middle regions, for three others were governing in other parts of Norway; as Tryggvi in the south-east; Gudrod in Westfold; and Sigurd Jarl in Throndeheim.³⁵

GUNILLDA stimulated her sons to destroy Sigurd Jarl, as a step to the monarchy of Norway. Her soliciting prevailed. The brother of Sigurd was seduced to conspire against him. The Jarl was surprised at a feast, and burnt alive, with the edifice, two years after Hakon's death.³⁶

THE indignant people of Throndeheim chose Hakon, surnamed the Jarl, the son of Sigurd, their leader, and frustrated the ambition of the sons of Gunilda. Many battles ensued: it was at last settled that Hakon should enjoy Thronde-

963.

³⁵ Snorre Saga af Haralldi Graffeld oc Hakoni Jarli, p. 165. Glimr the scald of Haralld, by his verses, excited Eyvindr to an emulating eulogium of Hakon. This offended Haralld, but his displeasure was appeased by Eyvindr becoming his scald, and resounding his fame, 166.

³⁶ Snorre, 170—173. Sigurd had greatly assisted in the elevation of Hakon the Good, who, in return, made him Jarl of Throndeheim. He is called by Snorre the wisest of the Norwegians, 125.

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heim, and the other kings were to possess the rest of the dominions of Hakon the Good.³⁷

THE future enmities between Hakon Jarl, and the sons of Eric, need not be³⁸ detailed. They enabled Harald Blaataund to subject Norway, who sometimes was the friend, and sometimes was the enemy of Hakon Jarl.³⁹ This prince, who has come down to us with a fame so eclipsed as to be called Hakon the Bad, became at last the monarch of Norway.⁴⁰ After a life of great warlike exertions, he fell in his age, before a new competitor for the moveable crown; this was Olave the son of Tryggva. The aggressions of Olave on England connect his actions with the reign of Ethelred, and demand a corner in the history of the Anglo-Saxons. The little sketch will forcibly express the state of manners in these districts.

Life of
Olaf,
Tryggva's
son.

IN 969, Tryggva his father suffered that death

³⁷ Snorre, p. 175.

³⁸ See Snorre, 175—184. and also his *Saga af Olasi Tryggva*, 195—203. Snorre adduces *Ara Frode* as an evidence on this subject.

³⁹ Snorre, 202, 203. 230.

⁴⁰ Snorre, 245. In Hakon's reign Greenland was discovered and colonised by the Icelanders. Eric the Red first saw and gave it that name, in hopes that a country with an epithet so pleasing might attract settlers. He found the traces of men both in the east and west regions, *et assamenta fracta et lapidarum opera unde cognoscerent quod ejus generis ibi vixerunt qui Vinlandiam incoluerint et quos Islandi vocant Screlingos*. *Ara Frode*, c. vi. p. 40.

of violence ⁴¹ which usually closed the lives of those inhabitants of the north who stepped out of the path of industry into the adventures of heroism. His widow fled, pregnant with Olaf, and he was born on an island in the lake where she was concealed. ⁴² In his childhood he was captured by Eastmen pirates, and was sold. He was afterwards purchased, and carried to Russia. ⁴³ He was there brought up by Walde-
 mar, who employed him in his army.

His favour declining, he quitted the Russian court, sailed to the Baltic, and settling in the isle of Bornholm, he began the dismal profession of a vikingr. ⁴⁴ After marrying a queen, on whose coast he landed, he commenced depredations on Scania and Gothland. ⁴⁵ On her death he extended the scene of his piracy, and Friesland, Saxony, and Flanders, mourned his visitations. From these, the unwearied sea-king turned towards England, and attacked Northumbria. As fortunate as enterprising, he made Scotland, the Hebrides, Ireland, Wales, Cumbria, and Normandy, feel the exertions of his valour. ⁴⁶

GREAT and ardent spirits are liable to be impressed by the peculiar and the interesting. Olaf anchoring once off the Scilly Isles, was converted

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⁴¹ Snorre, p. 177. *Island. Ann.* 2 Langb. 189.

⁴² Snorre Saga, Olaf's Tryg. c. i. p. 187.

⁴³ Snorre, 192, 193.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 211—213.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 215.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 221, 222.

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to Christianity by the lessons of a hermit, whose age and seclusion had won from the rude population the fame of a seer.⁴⁷

BUT although this warrior was daring every danger that storms and battles could present, his rigid heart was found penetrable by the shafts of love. A princess of Dublin had promised her chiefs to chuse a husband: they assembled that she might select, and Olaf, though uninvited, joined the meeting. The movements of the tender passions are more eccentric than the wanderings of the heathy meteor. Clothed in rough garments, made to keep off rain, and wrapped in a hairy gown, the figure of Olaf was not the vision of a cupid. But it was uncouth, and when Gyda's eye roved anxiously around, it arrested her notice: "Who are you?" "Olaf, a stranger." It was enough; and if Snorre has not slandered the lady, love, instantaneous love, supplied every other explanation. With all the simplicity of rude nature, she exclaimed, "If you desire me for your wife, I will chuse you for my husband."

OLAF was, however, less impetuous or less philosophical than the lady. He had the caution to enquire who she was, her name, and parentage: she declared her birth, and Olaf contemplated her again. She was young and beautiful. At last his tardy sensibility was kindled, and

⁴⁷ Snorre, 223, 224.

he became her husband, after conquering a rival.⁴⁸

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THE reputation of Olaf roused the crafty and cruel mind of Hakon the Bad, who sent a favourite to discover and to circumvent⁴⁹ him. But Hakon's disorderly passions had offended the chiefs whose families he had dared to violate, and they were in insurrection against him, when Olaf, led by his pretended friend, was approaching Norway. Hakon had fled before the chiefs when Olaf landed. The Norwegians eagerly placed the crown on his head, as a descendant of Harald Harfragre; and thus, in 995, Olaf became the monarch of Norway.⁵⁰

ONE of Olaf's most zealous occupations was, to convert Norway. He proceeded, with his desire, from province to province, and at last accomplished it, but by methods repugnant to that freedom of mind which is man's dearest birth-right, and as odious to the spirit and lessons of Christianity as the Paganism he⁵¹ abolished.

ETHELRED is stated to have sent the archbishop of York and two priests to Sweden to

⁴⁸ Snorre, 225, 226.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 246.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 247—253. Hakon the Bad was killed in his hiding-place. I take the date from the Isl. Ann. 190.

⁵¹ Snorre, 258—266. Among Olaf's Voyages, Snorre mentions his expedition to Vinland. As this was a country west of Greenland, it is obvious that the Norwegians or their colonies discovered and settled in part of North America in this tenth century.

BOOK VI. convert the natives. Olaf was baptised by him.⁵²

Last stage
of north-
ern piracy.

HARALD Harfragre had pursued the vikingr with a perseverance which promised to annihilate the custom, but on his death they flourished again. His son Eric, after his deposition, occupied his summers in depredations on the British islands to maintain his associates.⁵³ In the reign of Edmund they again abounded and made the Hebrides their resort.⁵⁴ On Eric's death his sons passed their winters on the Orkney and Shetland isles, but devoted their summers to piracies on Scotland and Ireland.⁵⁵ The Northern kings sometimes sailed against them with fleets of punishment to revenge aggressions on their own dominions. Thus Hakon the Good attacked eleven vikingr in Oresound, and hanged all those whom he met off Scania⁵⁶; but no combined system existed of repressing them. The practice, though from the rise of monarchies it was less frequent, had not yet excited the decided abhorrence of the northern society; therefore Harald Blaataand⁵⁷ of Denmark, and Tryggvi, Gudrawd, and Harald Graffeld, three

⁵² Locc. Hist. S. p. 52.; and Ver. Suio-Goth. p. 50.

⁵³ Snorre, p. 128. ⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Tunc autem Orcades et Hialldtlandiam suæ ditionis fecere Eiriki filii, census inde percipientes, ibique per hyemes commorantes. Per æstates autem mare occidentale piratica infestim reddidere prædas agentes circa littora Scotiæ atque Hiberniæ. Snorre, p. 130.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 132.

⁵⁷ Saxo Grammat. 180.

kings in Norway, indulged themselves in the practice.⁵⁸ CHAP.
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OLAF the son of Tryggvi was a sort of new Ragnor Lodbrog, in the activity, extent, and success of his marauding exploits. Bornholm, Scania, Gothland, Friesland, Saxony, Flanders, Normandy, and all the British islands, suffered from his presence.⁵⁹ The son of Hakon Jarl was a sea-king, whose summers were devoted to enterprises as fearless⁶⁰; but it is needless to multiply instances. The vikings, who have been mentioned, were men of rank in their society, who flourished between 930 and 1000; and their habits show, that, notwithstanding the checks which the direful custom had experienced, it was again becoming prevalent and respectable.

BUT yet while piracy was revivifying, other habits were also growing up which were destined to destroy it.

THE continuance of piracy had a tendency to preclude all traffic; but wherever profit is seen to glitter, though danger guard every avenue, and the spectre of death even hovers over the path, men will hasten to tread it, and dare the chances of its evils. Rude as the Northmen were in manners, arts, and virtues, they wanted commodities from each other, which the productive industry or resources of any one place could not supply. Hence skins for cloth-

⁵⁸ Snorre, 135—177. ⁵⁹ See before. ⁶⁰ Snorre, 295.

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ing were carried from Iceland to ⁶¹ Norway. Fish, cattle, and corn, their food, were often, from partial famines, required to be interchanged.⁶² Hemp, or seal skins, or whale hides, were needed for ropes.⁶³ Captives were to be sold, and, of course, slaves to be purchased⁶⁴; besides many articles of war and luxury.

THE necessity of conveying from coast to coast the wanted commodities, turned a part of society into merchants: their places of resort became noted. Thus Tunsberg in Norway was much frequented by merchant ships, which came to it not only from the adjoining Vikia, and the more northern regions, but from Denmark and Saxony.⁶⁵ Birca in Sweden was another considerable emporium, in which vessels of merchandise came from all parts of the Baltic to

⁶¹ Snorre, 176.

⁶² Thus the Scalld Eyvind, when a famine oppressed Norway, *pecora emit familiæ sustentandæ necessaria*. He sent his ships to purchase herrings, and for that purpose parted with his property and even with his arrows. Snorre, 186.

⁶³ See Ohther's Voyage.

⁶⁴ Lodinus was a rich man. *Accidit quadam æstate ut mercatum profectus Lodinus navi quæ ejus unius erat, mercibus que dives, cursum ad Esthoniæm dirigeret, ubi per æstatem mercaturæ operam dedit. Dum celebrantur nundinæ ad quas comportatæ sunt merces omnis generis, ducti etiam multi homines venales*, p. 256.

⁶⁵ Tunsbergam plurimæ tunc mercatoriæ frequentabant naves tam ex Vikia et borealibus regionibus Norwegiæ quam ex Dania et Saxonia. Snorre, 115.

acquire or to exchange the necessities of ⁶⁶ life, though its wealth and excellent harbours perpetually invited depredations of the ⁶⁷ vikingr. Our Dublin was in those days much frequented for trade. ⁶⁸

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It was auspicious to the future predominance of civilised habits that commerce became *honourable*. This circumstance in such an age of general warfare is as remarkable as beneficial. Perhaps, the honour attached to commerce arose partly from the vikingr disposing of their spoils themselves, and partly from the necessity they felt for the objects of traffic. The merchants who ventured to sail through such ambushes of pirates could not at first have been very numerous, and this rarity gave them increased value, and even dignity. In time also kings became their patrons.

COMMERCE was, however, in such credit, that Biorn prince of Westfold, the son of Harald Harfragre, became a merchant, and by his more warlike brothers was distinguished by that ⁶⁹ title.

⁶⁶ Adam. Brem. 18, 19. Helmoldus, p. 9. Rembert in 1 Langb. 444.

⁶⁷ Bircani etiam piratarum excursionibus quorum ibi magna copia est, sæpius impregnati. Adam. Brem. 18.

⁶⁸ Hunc — jussit Hakonus Jarl Dublinum ire mercatorem, id quod plurimis tunc temporis frequens erat. Snorre, 246.

⁶⁹ Biorno regi suæ etiam erant naves mercatoriæ quæ in commeatu exteras ad regiones, varias res ingentis pretii quæ pluraque necessaria videbantur ille advehebant. Illum igitur Navigatorem aut mercatorem (farmann eda Kaupmann) nominarunt ejus fratres. Snorre, 115.

BOOK VI. Others also, of illustrious ancestry, were traders, and are mentioned for the affluence acquired by it.⁷⁰

TRAFFIC being thus respectable, it is no wonder that another circumstance arose which operated to suppress piracy. This was the remarkable fact, that the two professions of pirate and merchant came in many instances to be blended. The same persons were at one time roaming to plunder, at another voyaging to trade: thus the people of Vikia are described as very commercial, at the same time that many of them were vikingr.⁷¹ Thus the friend whom Hakon the Bad had selected to circumvent Olaf, the son of Tryggva, had been long a pirate, but he was also a merchant, and was employed to visit Dublin in that capacity.⁷² Thus Lodinus, though he had sometimes pirated, was a merchant, and in his mercantile character visited Estland.⁷³ Biorn, surnamed the Trader, had also practised piracy.⁷⁴ Thus the celebrated men of Jomsburg were as eminent for their

⁷⁰ Snorre, 256, 257.

⁷¹ Ipsi enim Vikveriensēs in mercatura erant frequentes in Angliam et Saxoniam aut in Flandriam, aut in Daniam: quidam autem piraticam exercebant, hyemis in Christianorum terris transigentes. Snorre Saga, *Olaf's Helga*, vol. ii. p. 71.

⁷² Diu hic in piratica, interdum etiam in mercatura versatus. Snorre, vol. i. p. 240.

⁷³ Sæpe ille in mercatura versabatur, interdum etiam in piratica. Snorre, vol. i. p. 256.

⁷⁴ Biorno — in piratica parum frequens. Snorre, 115.

commercial as for their depredatory activity. It was perhaps from their martial habits and equipments, arising from this alternation of pursuit, that merchants were enabled to combat with the pirates who attacked them.⁷⁵ They sometimes secured the success of their defensive exertions by voyaging in companies.

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WHEN we read that the pirates seized every moveable commodity where they invaded, and destroyed by fire the habitations and growing produce of the field, when they could not remove it; that part of the inhabitants they slew on the spot, and carried away the others for slaves, sharing them by lot⁷⁶; that of these captives they killed such as were too old for labour, and were therefore unsaleable⁷⁷; and that they exposed the others to the public market so unsparingly, that we find, at one time, a queen, pale, worn out with fatigue and suffer-

⁷⁵ Rembert, who lived in the tenth century, mentions a conflict of this sort. 1 Langb. 444. Snorre also mentions a merchant ship which endured a long conflict with a sea-king, vol. i. p. 215. So the Niala Saga says, "Piratis in mercatores tela jacentibus, prælium oritur, hique se pulchre tutantur." Celto Scand. p. 83. This was in the year 992.

⁷⁶ Mare orientem versus sulcantes aggressi piratæ quidam Estenses homines captivos ducunt, bona diripiunt, occisis nonnullis, aliis quos inter se sortiti in servitutem abstractis. Snorre, vol. i. p. 192.

⁷⁷ Visus est Klercono æstate jam provector Thoralfus quam ut servus esse posset, nec laboribus satis idoneus; quare eum occidit. Ibid.

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ings, and squallidly clothed ⁷⁸; and, on another occasion, a prince ⁷⁹, standing up to be purchased like cattle; when we see, that from the plentiful supply, so low was the price, that Olaf the prince, who afterwards became king of Norway, and the invader of England, was sold for a garment ⁸⁰; and that a collection of boys were disposed of for a fine goat ⁸¹; when we discover such things to be frequent, it seems absurd to look into the north for increased civilisation.

AND yet the happy change was beginning to emerge. The principle of improvement was in existence, and its vegetation, though slow, was incessant and effectual.

As soon as the vikingr stooped from the pursuit of sanguinary glory to collect profit from traffic, piracy, as a laudable custom, must have begun to be undermined. It must have received another fatal blow, as soon as agriculture became reputable. Though valour was still the pride of the day, many chiefs were perpetually arising of peaceable and unwarlike habits. ⁸² At the period of which we now speak, one Sigurd Syr the king, who educated Saint Olave of Norway, is particularly described to us as assiduous in his domestic occupations; who often surveyed his fields and meadows, and flocks and herds, and who was fond of frequenting the places where

⁷⁸ Snorre, p. 256.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 193.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 192.

⁸¹ Ibid. 192.

⁸² Many of these are noticed in Snorre's *Heimskringla*.

the handicraft labours were carried on.⁸³ His pupil, Olave, though in the first part of his life he became a sea-king, yet among other things was educated to manual arts as well as warlike exercises.⁸⁴ The sweets of landed property and peaceable occupations once experienced, the impulse of nature would urge the chiefs to favour husbandry, and to induce or to compel a part, ever increasing, of the northern population to pursue the labours of the field in preference to war. Every regular and settled monarch favoured the new habit. Though the disorderly reigns which followed Harald Harfragre made his law against pirates almost obsolete, yet as soon as the government of Norway became established in Saint Olave, he revived the prohibition. He forbade all rapine.⁸⁵ He enforced his law so rigorously, that though the vikingr were the children of the most potent chiefs, he punished the offenders by the loss of life or limb; nor could prayers or money avert the ⁸⁶penalty. One of the Canutes was equally hostile to the habits of the vikingr. He prohibited all rapine and violence throughout his kingdom, and was highly displeased that Egill should have pirated

⁸³ Snorre's Saga, Olaf's Helga, c. i. p. 1. and p. 31.

⁸⁴ Arcum tractandi atque natandi imprimis peritus, in pilis et missilibus manu jaculandis eximius, ad artes fabriles a natura formatus, lynceis que oculis ad ea omnia quæ vel ipse vel alii fabricaverant. Snorre. Olaf's Helga, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Snorre, tom. i. p. 315.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 316.

BOOK in the summer. “ In addicting yourself to
 VI. piracy,” said the king, “ you have done an
 abominable thing. It is a Pagan custom, and I
 forbid it.” ⁸⁷

It was indeed a custom which had been so familiar and so extolled, that its suppression was difficult. Olaf’s severity against it excited an insurrection in his dominions.⁸⁸ But though interested men struggled hard to uphold it, the good sense of mankind awaking, however tardily, to their real interests, was combating against it. The benefits emanating to all from the cultivation of agriculture was announced in terror the most impressive, by the dismal famines which afflicted them. The augmented power, the more striking dignity, and the permanent happiness accruing to the chiefs from a numerous clan of quiet peasantry, from the annual riches of tillage, and the mercantile importation of every other luxury; the lessons, though rude, of their new Christian clergy; the natural indolence and quietude of human nature, when permitted to follow its own tendencies, and when freed from the goading stings of want, by the fruitful harvest of regular labour, must have alienated a large part of the northern society from the practice of their ancestors, and must have made piracy, in an accumulating ratio, unpopular and dishonourable. Human reason is never slow to

⁸⁷ Knytlinga Saga, Ap. Bartholin, 453.

⁸⁸ Snorre, p. 317.

amend its erring associations, when once a new beam of light occurs to it, and nothing can more strongly paint the progressive change of manners, than the rapid degradation of the meaning of the word *vikingr*. At first designating a soldier, it became appropriated by pirates, when every warrior pirated. But now that the condemning voice of society was raising against rapine, the *vikingr* hastened fast to become a synonyme of the robber.⁸⁹ Poets, who often stamp the morals of ages, and who always influence the population of the day, began to brand it with that opprobrium, which, from their numbers, falls with the most deterring effect.⁹⁰

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THE improved feelings of society on this subject could not accumulate without communicating some contagion to the *vikingr* themselves. Though the novel sentiment might be unable to annihilate their evil habits, it awakened, in their fierce bosoms, a little sense of moral distinction; it compelled them to seek some shield of merit to avert that most terrible of all ills, the con-

⁸⁹ The editors of the *Gunnlaugi Saga* give many examples of this, p. 298—300.

⁹⁰ Thus *Sighvatr*, the scald of Olave, sang :

Rapinæ ita pati isti homines suæ

Pænam debuere—

Scelestorum genus et nequam hominum,

Ille sic furta est amolitus.

Sexcentis jussit patriæ terræ

Custos, armis et gladiis præscidi

Piratis et hostibus capita regni. Snorre, 316. tom. ii.

BOOK VI. tempt and hatred of the society to which we belong. They began to feel that it was not honourable for a brave man to prey upon the peaceful merchant, who feeds and benefits his contemporaries, nor to murder the unoffending passenger whom various necessities enforce to roam. A new sort of pirates then appeared more suitable to the new-born morality of their feelings, and to the mental revolutions of the day. The peculiar and self-chosen task of these meritorious warriors was to protect the defenceless navigator, and to seek and assail the indiscriminate plunderer.⁹¹ The exact chronology of these new characters is not clear, but they seem reasonably to belong to the last age of piracy. Their existence was above all laws, efficacious in destroying piracy. They executed what society sighed for, and what wise kings enacted, and their appearance must have hastened the odium of the indiscriminate pirate, who became gradually hunted down as the general enemy of the human race. It is pleasing to read of this distinction in so many authors. Some men associated with the solemnity of an oath, that they would in piracy acquire money honourably, because they would exterminate the berserkir and the malignant, and give safety to the ⁹²merchant. So others pursued piracy to deprive the plundering vikingr of the spoil they had torn from the

⁹¹ See the Torsteins Saga, ap. Verelius. Herv. Saga, 47.

⁹² Bua Saga, ap. Barth. 457.

husbandmen and merchants.⁹³ With the same character, Eric the Good is exhibited in the Knytlinga Saga.⁹⁴ CHAP.
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By the laws of the pirate Hialmar, we see that they bound themselves to protect trade and agriculture, not to plunder women, nor to force them to their ships if unwilling, nor to eat raw flesh, which was the practice of the savage pirate.⁹⁵

ON the whole, we may state, that after the tenth century piracy became discreditable, and that in every succeeding reign it approached nearer to its extinction, until it was completely superseded by the influence of commerce, the firmer establishment of legal governments, improved notions of morality, and the experience of the superior comforts of social order, industry, and peaceful pursuits.

⁹³ The Vatzdæla, ap. Barth. 458.

⁹⁴ Knytlinga Saga, ap. Barth. 452.

⁹⁵ Bartholin states these laws from the Orvar Oddr Sogu, p. 456.; and see the laws of the sea-king Half, another of this band of naval chivalry, in Bartho. 455. Saxo also describes another set of heroes, who, in the following age, fought against the common pirates, lib. xiv. p. 259.

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ETHELRED *the Unready*.

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978.

ETHELRED succeeded on his brother's assassination; but the action which procured his power was too atrocious to give all the effect to the policy of his adherents which had been projected. Dunstan retained his dignity, and at least his influence; for what nation could be so depraved as to patronise a woman, who, at her own gate, had caused her king and son-in-law to be assassinated! In attempting to subvert Dunstan, by such a deed, she failed. After no long interval, he excited the popular odium, and the terrors of guilt, so successfully against her, that she became overwhelmed with shame, and took shelter in a nunnery, and in building nunneries, from the public abhorrence.

THE reign of Ethelred presents the history of a bad government, uncorrected by its unpopularity and calamities; and of a discontented nation preferring at last the yoke of an invader, whose visits its nobles either invited or encouraged. In the preceding reigns, from Alfred to Edgar, the Anglo-Saxon spirit was never agi-

tated by danger, but it acted to triumph. By its exertions, a rich and powerful nation had been created, which might have continued to predominate in Europe with increasing honour and great national felicity. But within a few years after Ethelred's accession the pleasing prospect begins to fade. The tumultuary contests in the last reign between the monks and the clergy and their respective supporters, had not had time to cease. Dunstan, acquiring the direction of the government under Ethelred, involved the throne again in the conflict, and the sovereign was placed at variance with the nobles and parochial clergy. The measures of the government were unsatisfactory to the nation. The chiefs became factious and disloyal, and the people discontented, till a foreign dynasty was at last preferred to the legal native succession.

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ETHELRED was but ten years of age when he attained the crown. His amiable disposition gave the tears of affection to his brother's memory; but Elfrida could not pardon a sensibility which looked like accusation, and might terminate in rebellion to her will, and the disappointment of her ambition. She seized a waxen candle which was near, and beat the terrified infant with a dreadful severity, which left him nearly expiring. The anguish of the blows never quitted his remembrance. It is affirmed, that during the remainder of his life,

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he could not endure the presence of a 'light. Perhaps the irresolution, the pusillanimity, the yielding imbecility, which characterised him during his long reign, may have originated in the perpetual terror which the guardianship of such a mother, striving to break his temper into passive obedience to her will, on this and other occasions, wilfully produced.

As her power declined, the feelings of the nation expressed themselves more decidedly. The commander of Mercia, and Dunstan, attended by a great crowd, went to Wareham, removed the body of the deceased sovereign, and buried it with honour at ²Shaftesbury. Dunstan might now triumph: though his opponents might equal him in daring, they were his inferiors in policy.

280.

AFTER a flow of prosperity uninterrupted for nearly a century, England, in the full tide of its strength, was insulted by seven Danish ships, which plundered Southampton and Thanet. The same vikings, in the next season, ravaged in Cornwall and Devonshire.³ In the year following, three ships molested the isle of Portland.⁴

² Malmsb. 62.

³ Flor. 362. Sax. Chron. 125.

³ Flor. Wig. 362. Sax. Chron. 125. Tib. B. 1. As Olave Tryggvason was at this time marauding on the English coast, and at last reached the Scilly Isles, he may have been the sea-king who renewed the invasion of England.

⁴ Flor. 368. Sim. Dun. 161.

THE re-appearance of the Northmen excited much conversation at the time.⁵ Another attempt of the same sort was made at Wecedport, where the English gained the field of burial, though Goda, the governor of Devonshire, and the brave Stenwold, fell. In this year Dunstan died.⁶ He had enjoyed his power during the first ten years of Ethelred's reign, but the civil dissensions, which he appears to have begun and perpetuated, unnerved the strength of the country. The vices of the sovereign increased the evil.

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WITHIN three years afterwards formidable invasions of the Danes began to occur. A large force, commanded by Justin and Gurthmund, attacked Ipswich.⁷ They advanced from an un- guarded coast, through an unguarded country, as far as Malden. Brithnoth, the governor of Essex, collected some forces to oppose them, but he was defeated and slain.

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THE measure adopted by the government on this event seems to have produced all the subsequent calamities. Instead of assembling the

⁵ Malmsb. 62.

⁶ Flor. Wig. 364. Sax. Chron. 126. Dunstan died in the year 988. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. merely mention his death, without the printed addition of his attaining heaven. Siric was consecrated to his see. The preceding year was memorable for its diseases.

⁷ The printed chronicle leaves the place an imperfect blank. The MS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. have both Gypeswic; and see Flor. 364.

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nobles with an army sufficient to chastise the invaders, the council of Ethelred advised him to buy off the invaders! Siric, the successor of Dunstan, reasoned, that as they only came for booty, it would be wiser to give them what they wanted. Ten thousand pounds were accordingly disgracefully granted as the price of their retreat.⁸ Whether the king's ecclesiastical advisers were afraid of calling out the chiefs of the country with their military arrays; or, like most clerical statesmen, were incompetent to devise the wisest public measures; or whether the nobles, in their contempt for the king and his administration, were not displeased at the invasion, and therefore did not oppose the payment, cannot now be certainly known; but no measure could have been taken more likely to excite the Northmen to new depredations on a country that rewarded an invader for his aggressions.

THE payment is noticed by the annalists as having produced the evil of direct taxation. We now pay that, says the chronicler of the twelfth century, from custom, which terror first extorted for the Danes.⁹ The impositions were not remitted when the necessity had disappeared.

ETHELRED has been painted to us as a tall handsome man, elegant in manners, beautiful in countenance, and interesting in his deport-

⁸ Malmsb. 62. 365. Sax. Chron. 126. Fl. 365. The Saxon Chronicle makes Siric the author of this counsel.

⁹ Hunt. 357.

ment.¹⁰ The sarcasm of Malmsbury gives his portrait in a sentence: he was a “a fine *sleeping* figure.”¹¹ He might adorn a lady’s cabinet; he disgraced a council.

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WHEN wiser thoughts had sway, the right means of defence were put in action. Powerful ships were constructed at London, and were filled with selected soldiers¹²; but all the wisdom of the measure was baffled by the choice of the commander. Alfric was the person intrusted to command the Anglo-Saxon fleet.

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ALFRIC, in 988, had succeeded his father in the dukedom of Mercia.¹³ Three years afterwards, from causes not explained, but probably connected with the dissensions above-mentioned, he was expelled from England.¹⁴ In 992, he was appointed to lead the new fleet, with another duke, and two bishops, whose addition to the military commission, implies the prevalence of ecclesiastical counsels, and perhaps some mistrust of the nobles. Their instructions were to surprise the Danes in some port at which they could be surrounded. The judicious scheme was foiled by Alfric’s treason. When the Danes were traced to a station which admitted of the

¹⁰ Flor. Wig. 362. Matt. West. 378.

¹¹ Rex—pulchre ad dormiendum factus, p. 68.

¹² Flor. 365. In 992, Oswald the friend of Dunstan died. Sax. Chron.

¹³ Flor. 363. Sax. Chron. 125.

¹⁴ Flor. 363. Sim. Dun. 161.

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enterprise, he sent them word of the intention, and consummated his perfidy by sailing secretly to join them. The Anglo-Saxons found the enemy in flight, but could only overtake one vessel. The rest did not, however, reach their harbours unmolested; a division of the English fleet from London and East Anglia met them on their way, and attacked them with a bravery natural to the island. The capture of Alfric's vessels crowned their victory, but its ignominious master escaped, though with difficulty. The king barbarously avenged it on Alfric, by blinding his son Algar.¹⁵ The treason of Alfric and his companions seems inexplicable, unless we suppose it to have been an effect of the national divisions or discontent.

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THIS exertion, though its end was so disgraceful, had driven the enemy from the southern counties. The Northern districts were then attacked. An armament stormed Bebbanburgh, and afterwards, turning to the Humber, filled part of Lincolnshire and Northumbria with their depredations. The provincials armed to defend their possessions, but they confided the command to three chiefs of Danish ancestry, who with fatal treachery fled at the moment of joining battle.¹⁶ Another indication of the discontent of the nobles and the unpopularity of the government.

¹⁵ Flor. 366. Malmsh. 62.

¹⁶ Sim. Dun. 162. Sax. Chron. 127.

IN 994, the breezes of the spring wafted into the Thames two warlike kings, Olave Tryggva's son, king of Norway, and Svein king of Denmark, in a temporary confederation. They came with ninety-four ships. They were repelled at London; but though their force was unimportant, they were able to overrun the maritime part of Essex and Kent, and afterwards Sussex and Hampshire, with successful outrage.¹⁷ The progress of so small a force, and the presence of two kings accompanying it, may induce the reflective reader to suspect that they did not come without some previous concert or invitation from some part of the nation. But on this occasion, when a small exertion of the national vigour could have overpowered the invaders, Ethelred again obeyed a fatal advice. He sent to offer tribute and provisions, and to know the sum which would stop their hostilities! Sixteen thousand pounds was the sum demanded, by fewer than ten thousand men, for the redemption of England.¹⁸ Can we avoid inferring treason in his councils? That the nobles should patronise such a measure looks like a scheme for abasing the power of their ecclesiastical opponents, who still governed the royal mind; or of changing the dynasty, as at last took place, from Ethelred to Svein. Infa-

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¹⁷ Sax. Chron. 128. Flor. Wig. 366. Sim. Dun. 162.

¹⁸ Sax. Chron. 129. Flor. 367.

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tuation without treachery could hardly have been so imbecil, as to have bought off an invader a second time, when the nation was so powerful, and the enemy so inferior.¹⁹

OLAVE was invited to Ethelred's court, and, upon receiving hostages for his safety, he went to the royal city, where the king received him with honour. During his visit, he received the Christian rite of confirmation, and had rich presents. When he departed for his country in the summer, he promised to molest England no more, and he kept his word.²⁰

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THE army of Svein, on the last capitulation, had wintered at Southampton. After three years respite, it resumed its hostilities, sailed along Wessex, and, doubling the Land's End, entered the Severn. Wales, and afterwards Cornwall and Devonshire, were infested. Proceeding up the Thamar, they leaped from their ships, and spread the flames as far as Lydeford. The monastery of Tavistock fell amid the general ruin. Their ships were laden with the plunder, and the invaders wintered in security near the scene of their outrage.²¹

¹⁹ The sermon of Lupus, preached about this time, implies the insubordination of the country, and its enmity to the clergy. He calls the nation "Priest-slayers" and robbers of the clergy, and laments the seditions that prevailed. See it ap. Hickes's Diss. Ep. 99—106.

²⁰ Malmsb. 63. Sax. Chron. 129. Sim. Dun. 163.

²¹ Sim. Dun. 163. Sax. Chron. 129. Malmsb. 63.

RESUMING their activity with the revival of vegetation, they visited the Frome, and spread over great part of Dorset. Advancing thence to the Isle of Wight, they made alternate insults on this district and Dorsetshire, and compelled Sussex and Hampshire to supply them with provisions.²² But was the powerful nation of England thus harassed with impunity? When its enemies even stationed themselves on its coasts in permanent hostility, was no exertion directed to repress them? The answer of history is, that often was the Anglo-Saxon army collected to punish, but as soon as the battle was about to commence, either some treason or some misfortune prevented. They quitted their ranks, and gave an easy triumph to the half-welcomed Danes.²³

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IN the next year, the Danish army, almost naturalised in England, approached the Thames, and, turning into the Medway, surrounded Rochester. The Kentishmen assembled to protect their city, but after a furious battle they yielded their dead to the invaders, who, collecting horses, almost destroyed the west of Kent.²⁴

A NAVAL and military armament was now ordered against the invaders.²⁵ But again the

²² Sax. Chron. 129. Sim. Dun. 164.

²³ Flor. 368. Sim. Dun. 163.

²⁴ Sax. Chron. 130. Matt. West. 386.

²⁵ Flor. 369.

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consequences of the national disaffection occurred. The commanders, as if befriending the invaders, interposed wilful delays in the equipment of the force. The fleet, when ready, was merely assembled; day after day drawled on without exertion, and injured only those who had been assessed to provide it. Whenever it was about to sail, some petty obstacle delayed it. The enemy was always permitted to increase and unite his strength; and when he chose to retire, then our fleet pursued. Thus even the very means which, properly used, would have cleared the British ocean of its oppressors, only increased the calamity of the nation. The people were called to labour to no purpose; their money was wasted as emptily; and by such mock preparations, the enemies were more encouraged to invade.²⁶ When the Danish forces retired, the army of Ethelred almost depopulated Cumberland. His fleet set sail to coast round Wales and meet him; but the winds repelling them, they ravaged the Isle of Man as the substitute.²⁷

1000.

A POWERFUL diversion happened this year in favour of Ethelred; for the quarrel between Svein and Olave attained its height. Assisted by a Swedish king²⁸, and the son of Hakon

²⁶ Sax. Chron. 130.

²⁷ Flor. 369. Sax. Chron. 130.

²⁸ Sweden was at this time in the hand of many kings:
"Isto tempore multi erant Uplandiarum reges, suæ singuli

Jarl ²⁹, Svein attacked Olave by surprise, near the island of Wollin, with a great superiority of force. The bravery of Olave could not compensate for a deficiency of numbers. His ship was surrounded; but, disdaining to be a prisoner, he leapt into the sea ³⁰, and disappeared from pursuit. Popular affection, unwilling to lose its favourite, gave birth to that wild rumour which has so often attended the death of the illustrious, that the king had escaped the fray, and was living recluse on some distant ³¹ shore. Authentic history places his death in this battle. ³²

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THIS diversion was made more complete by the Northmen also molesting Normandy. ³³ But the interval brought no benefit to England. The Danes returned in 1001, with their usual facility. The same measure was adopted not-

provinciæ imperitantes — Heidmarkiæ imperium tenuere duo fratres — Gudsbrandaliæ Gudrodus; etiam Raumarikia suus erat rex; suus quoque Thotniæ et Hadalandiæ nec non suus Valdresiæ. Snorre, vol. ii. p. 36, 37.

²⁹ Theodoric, c. 14. p. 23. Ara Frode, p. 49. Snorre details the confederacy against Olave, i. p. 334—345. Saxo gives the Danish account, lib. x. p. 191.

³⁰ Saxo. 191. Snorre, 345.

³¹ Theodoric, 24. The tale must have made impression, for Theodoric declares, he knows not which relation was the truest.

³² Ara Frode dates it 130 years after the fall of Edmund in East Anglia, or in 1000, c. vii. p. 49. The conquerors shared Norway. Snorre, 348.

³³ Sax. Chron. 130.

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withstanding its experienced inefficacy; and twenty-four thousand pounds was the third ransom of the English nation.³⁴ No measure could tend more to bring on the government the contempt of the people.

Massacre
of the
Danes.

THE year 1002 has become memorable in the annals of crime, by an action as useless as imbecility could devise, and as sanguinary as cowardice could perpetrate. On the day before St. Brice's festival, every city received secret letters from the king, commanding the people, at an appointed hour, to destroy the Danes there suddenly by the sword, or to surround and consume them with fire. This order was the more atrocious, as the Danes were living in peace with the Anglo-Saxons. The expressions of Malmsbury imply even an endeared amity of connection; for he says, with correct feeling, that it was miserable to see every one betray his dearest guests, whom the cruel necessity made only more beloved.³⁵ To murder those we have embraced, was an horrible idea, congenial only to Ethelred and his counsellors.

THE tyrannical command was obeyed. All the Danes dispersed through England, with

³⁴ Sax. Chron. 132. Both the MS. Chronicles have 24,000*l*.

³⁵ Malmsb. 64. The Saxon Chronicle says that Ethelred ordered it, because it had been reported to him that they had a design to murder him first, and then all his witan, and thereupon to possess his kingdom without opposition, an. 1002. See Miss Gurney's translation of it, p. 158.

their wives, families, and even youngest babes, were mercilessly butchered.³⁶ So dreadful was the excited spirit, that Gunhilda, the sister of Svein, who had married an English earl, had received Christianity, and had voluntarily made herself the pledge of Danish peace, was ordered to be beheaded by the infamous Edric. Her husband and boy were first slain in her presence. She foretold the vengeance which would pour upon the English nation, and she joined her lifeless friends.³⁷

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GREAT villany has been supposed to proceed from great mental energy perverted. But Ethelred evinced an absolute incapability of the

³⁶ Matt. West. 391.; Sax. Chron. 133.; Flor. 370.; Sim. Dun. 165.; Hoveden, 429.; Rad. Dic. 461.; Malmsb. 64.; Hunt. 360.; Bromton, 885.; Knyghton, 2315.; Walsingham Ypod. 18., unite in stating that all the Danes in England were killed. That only the Danish soldiers in English pay were killed, appears to me to have no foundation. Gunilda and her family were not Danish mercenaries, nor were the women and children, of whom Wallingford speaks, whose loose authority has been put against all the rest. We find that Edgar admitted many Danes into England; many more must have settled out of the different invaders in Ethelred's reign. To what Danish families the cruel order extended, cannot now be ascertained. I cannot think that it could possibly include those whose ancestors came into England in Alfred's youth, and who settled in East Anglia and Northumbria, because the four or five generations which had elapsed, must have made them Englishmen. How many perished cannot be explored. The crime of the schemers depends not upon the number of the victims.

³⁷ Matt. West. 391. Malmsb. 69.

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most common associations of human reasoning. That Svein would return in vengeance was a natural expectation; and yet the person appointed to rescue England from his fury was Elfric, whom the king had banished for his misconduct, who had proved his gratitude for his pardon by an enormous treachery; whose son the king had in return deprived of eye-sight; and who now by some new intrigue was restored to favour.

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SVEIN did not long delay the provoked invasion; he landed at Exeter, and by the treachery of the Norman governor, whom the king had set over it, he obtained and dismantled ³⁸ it. He proceeded through the country to Wilts, avenging his murdered countrymen. The Anglo-Saxons, under Elfric, met him. The instant that the battle was about to join, Elfric affected a sudden illness and declined the contest. Svein, availing himself of their divisions, led his army through Salisbury to the sea-coast laden with plunder.

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IN the next year, Svein came with his fleet to Norwich, and burnt it. Ulfketul, the commander of East Anglia, proposed to buy a peace; yet, finding the enemy advancing and plundering, he made one exertion against ³⁹ them, but they regained their ships. A famine now

³⁸ Flor. 371.³⁹ Flor. 372.

afflicted England, and the Danes returned to the Baltic.⁴⁰

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ETHELRED had, in 1002, married Emma, the daughter of Richard I., the third duke of Normandy.⁴¹ The king's infidelity and neglect was resented by his high-spirited queen.⁴² The insult was personal, and her anger was natural; but that her father should avenge it by seizing all the English who happened to pass into his dominions; by killing some and imprisoning the rest⁴³, was an act of barbarity, which announces the contempt into which England had sunk.

NEVER was such a nation plunged into calamity so unnecessarily. The means were abundant of exterminating Svein, and such invaders, if a government had but existed, with whom its people would have co-operated. The report of Turketul to Svein gives us an impressive picture of the English condition: "A country illustrious and powerful; a king asleep, solicitous only about women and wine, and trembling at war; *hated by his people*, and derided by strangers. Generals, envious of

⁴⁰ Flor. 372. Sax. Chron. 134. The famine is a strong evidence of the extent of Svein's vindictive ravages.

⁴¹ Sax. Chron. 132. He had married an earl's daughter before, who brought him Edmund. Ethel. Abb. 362.

⁴² Malmsb. 64.

⁴³ Matt. West. 382. Walsingham narrates that Ethelred attempted an invasion of Normandy, which ended very unfortunately. Ypodigma Neustræ, p. 16.

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each other; and weak governors, ready to fly at the first shout of battle.⁴⁴

ETHELRED was liberal to poets who amused him. Gunnlaugr, the Scald, sailed to London, and presented himself to the king with an heroic poem⁴⁵, which he had composed on the royal *virtues*. He sang it, and received in return a purple tunic, lined with the richest furs, and adorned with fringe; and was appointed to a station in the palace.⁴⁶ By a verse which remains of it, we may see that adulation is not merely an indigenous plant of eastern climates, or of polished times, but that it flourishes hardily, even amid Polar snows, and in an age of pirates.

The soldiers of the king, and his subjects,

The powerful army of England,

Obey Ethelred,

*As if he was an angel of the beneficent Deity.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Malmsb. 69.

⁴⁵ Gunnlaugi Saga, c. vii. p. 87.

⁴⁶ Gunn. Saga, p. 89. When he left Ethelred, in the following spring, the king gave him a gold ring which weighed seven ounces, and desired him to return in autumn, p. 99. The Scald was lucky. He went to Ireland and sang. The king there wished to give him two ships, but was told by his treasurer, that poets had always clothes, or swords, or gold rings. Gunnlaugr accordingly received fine garments and a gold ring, p. 103. In the Orkneys a poem procured him a silver axe, p. 103. In Gothland he got an asylum of festivity for the winter, p. 105. At Upsal he met another poet, Rafn, and, what was worse, when both had sung, the king asked each for his opinion on the other's composition. The catastrophe need hardly be mentioned. Rafn told Gunnlaugr, that there was an end of their friendship, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Gunnl. 89.

THE history of successful devastation and pusillanimous defence, is too uniform, and disgusting to be detailed. In 1006, the Danes obtained 36,000*l*.⁴⁸ In 1008, the feeble king oppressed his subjects with a new exaction. Every 310 hides of land were assessed to build and present one vessel, and every eight hides were to furnish an helmet and ⁴⁹breast-plate. The hides of England, according to the best enumeration of them which exists⁵⁰, were 243,600. If we take this as the criterion, the taxation produced an additional force of 785 ships, and armour for 30,450 men.

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ETHELRED had now selected a new favourite in Edric; a man of low birth, but eloquent, plausible, and crafty. He is noted for excelling all men in perfidy and cruelty. He was made duke of Mercia in 1007.⁵¹

THE fleet, the product of the new assessment, assembled at Sandwich. Brihtric, the brother of Edric, and as ambitious and deceitful, ac-

1009.

⁴⁸ The printed Sax. Chron. p. 136. says 30,000*l*. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. have 36,000*l*. Flor. 373.; Mailros, 154.; Hoveden, 430.; Peterb. 34.; Al. Bev. 114.; Sim. Dun. 166.; and Rad. Dic. 462. also give 36,000*l*.

⁴⁹ Sax. Chron. 136.

⁵⁰ The very ancient catalogue which Spelman copied into his Glossary, 353., and Camden into his Britannia, presents to us a detailed account of the hides in England. Gale has published one almost similar, but not quite. Rer. Ang. vol. iii. p. 748.

⁵¹ Flor. Wig. 373.

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cused Wulfnoth, the father of earl Godwin. Wulfnoth fled, and carried twenty ships with him, and commenced pirate. Brihtric pursued with eighty ships, but a tempest wrecked, and Wulfnoth burnt them. These events destroyed the confidence and the courage of the rest of the fleet. It dispersed and retired.⁵² The analysts add, that thus perished all the hopes of England.

IN 1010, the triumph of the Danes was completed in the surrender of sixteen counties of England, and the payment of 48,000*l*.⁵³ Thus they divided the country with Ethelred, as his father Edgar, the first patron of the civil dissensions, had shared it unjustly with the ill-used Edwin.

1013. THE next invasion of Svein was distinguished by the revolution of the government of the country. The people gradually seceded from Ethelred, and appointed the Dane their king.

⁵² Flor. Wig. 374. Sax. Chron. 137, 138. In mentioning Wulfnoth, the printed Saxon Chronicle adds, that he was the father of earl Godwin, p. 137. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. has not these words, nor the Tib. B. 4., nor the Laud MS. which Gibson quotes. As he only marks the Laud MS. to be without, I presume that his other MSS. had them.

⁵³ Flor. 375—378. Sax. Chron. 139—142. For a particular description of this dismal period, see Osberne's Life of S. Elphegus, who was taken into Canterbury and killed, because 3000*l*. were not paid for his ransom. They hurled bones and skulls of cattle upon him till one struck him on the head with an iron axe. Gurney, Sax. Chron. 170. Was he one of the counsellors of Ethelred who were obnoxious to the Danish partisans?

The earl of Northumbria, and all the people in his district, the five burghers, and all the army on the north of Watling-street, submitted to his sovereignty.⁵⁴ He ordered them to supply provisions and horses, and committing their hostages and his ships to his son Canute, he commenced a visit of decisive conquest to the south. Oxford and Winchester accepted his dominion; but London resisted, because Ethelred was in it.

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SVEIN marched to Bath, and the duke Ethelmere, and all the western thanes, yielded themselves to him. The citizens of London at last followed the example.

TERRIFIED by the universal disaffection, Ethelred sent his children into⁵⁵ Normandy, and privately withdrew to the Isle of⁵⁶ Wight, where he passed his Christmas; after which, on hearing of their good reception by his queen's brother, Richard, he departed also himself, and was kindly received.⁵⁷

Ethelred's
flight.

THE new sovereignty of Svein was severe in its pecuniary exactions⁵⁸, but it was short.

Svein's
death.

⁵⁴ Sax. Chron. 143.

⁵⁵ Sax. Chron. 143, 144. Flor. Wig. 379, 380. Malmsb. 69. This author remarks, that the Londoners did not abandon the king till he fled himself. He says of them in high panegyric: "Laudandi prorsus viri et quos Mars ipse collata non sperneret hasta si ducem habuissent."

⁵⁶ Cumque clandestinis itineribus. Malmsb. p. 69.

⁵⁷ Malmsb. 70. Flor. 380.

⁵⁸ Hermannus, who wrote in 1070, thus describes his pe-

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He died, the year after his elevation, at Gainsborough.⁵⁹

THIS event produced a new change in the Anglo-Saxon politics. The Danish soldiers in England, the Thingamanna⁶⁰, appointed Canute, the son of Svein, for their king⁶¹; but the English chieftains sent to Ethelred to offer him the crown again, on condition that he should govern rightly, and be less tyrannical.⁶²

cuniary exactions: "Sueyn insuper lugubre malum scilicet ubique ponit tributum quod infortunium hodieque luit Anglia, multum felix, dives *ac dulcis nimium si non forent tributa.*" MS. Tib. B. 2. p. 25.

⁵⁹ The annalists are fond of stating, that he was killed by St. Edmond; Snorre adds a curious comparison, "Just," says he, "as Julian the Apostate was killed by *Saint Mercury.*" Saga Olafi Helga, c. xi. p. 10.

⁶⁰ The body of troops who, during Svein's prosperity, and the reigns of his posterity, became stationary in England, are called Thingamanna by Snorre, tom. ii. p. 15. The Olaf Tryggvason's Saga, p. 100.; and the Knytlinga Saga (Celto Scand. p. 103.) say they received appointed stipends. Their commander, Heming, kept the conquered country in subjection to Canute. Two of their orders were, not to disperse rumours, and not to go beyond their city of a night. Trygg. Saga, p. 100. Celto Sc.

⁶¹ The Sagas state Canute to have been but ten years of age at Svein's death. But this is a mistake.

⁶² Flor. Wig. 381. "They assured him that no one was dearer to them than their natural lord, if he would govern them more righteously than he did before." Gur. Sax. Chron. 173. About this time occurred the war against Brian, king of Connaught. See the Niala Saga in Celto Scand. 107—116. and 120—129. I mention it, because to this battle belong the poetical vision of the Northern destinies, and the Scaldic Ode, which Gray has so vigorously translated in his Fatal Sisters.

Munster

Brian totally defeated the Danes
at Clontarf - but he fell himself.

ETHELRED sent his son Edward to make the required promises of good government.⁶³ Pledges were exchanged for the faithful performance of the contract; every Danish king was declared a perpetual outlaw⁶⁴, and in Lent the king returned.

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CANUTE had now to maintain his father's honours by his sword. Confronted by a powerful force of the English, he sailed from East-Anglia to Sandwich, and landed the hostages which his father had received for the obedience of the English. But in revenge for the opposition of the nation, he brutally maimed them of their hands and noses.⁶⁵ They were children of the first nobility.⁶⁶ Canute then retired to Denmark, to watch his interests there, and to provide the means for stronger exertions to gain the crown of England.⁶⁷

To make head against Canute, Ethelred dispersed, around the neighbouring countries, high promises of reward to every warrior who would

⁶³ Flor. 381. He said, "that he would amend all that had been complained of, if they would return to him with one consent and without guile." Sax. Chron. G. 173.

⁶⁴ Sax. Chron. 145.

⁶⁵ Flor. 382.

⁶⁶ Malmsb. 71.

⁶⁷ Encomium Emmæ, written by a contemporary, 167. Svein's body was carried to Roschild, and buried. The autumn closed with an inundation of the sea, which laid the towns and country for many miles under water, and destroyed the inhabitants. Flor. 382. Malmsb. 71.

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join the English standard⁶⁸: a great number came to him. Among these was Olave, the son of Harald Grænski, a Norwegian sea-king, who, in 1007, at twelve years of age, had begun his maritime profession under a military⁶⁹ tutor. He afterwards obtained the crown of Norway, and the reputation of a saint. He arrived in England in the year of Svein's death.⁷⁰

CANUTE called to his aid Eric the Jarl, one of the rulers of Norway, and one of the sons of Hakon the Bad⁷¹, and sailed to England. His abilities made his advance the march of victory. The perfidious Edric crowned the treasons of his life by flying to Canute with forty ships. Wessex submitted to the invaders, and gave hostages for its fidelity.⁷²

THE hostilities of the contending parties were now fast assuming the shape of decision. To Canute's well-arranged army, Edmund, the son of Ethelred, endeavoured to oppose a competent force, but the panic of the king, excited by rumoured treachery, disappointed his hopes.

⁶⁸ Snorre Olafi Helga, c. vi. p. 6.

⁶⁹ Snorre, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Snorre, p. 9. Knytlinga Saga, p. 103.

⁷¹ Knytlinga Saga, p. 10. Eric had gained great fame in two battles: one against Olave, Tryggva's son, the other against the Jomsburgers. Snorre, ii. p. 23. Svein had given Norway to Eric and his brother Hakon. When Eric came to England, he left his brother Hakon to govern all Norway, whom St. Olave expelled. Snorre, p. 211. Hakon was drowned. Ib. 321.

⁷² Sax. Chron. 146.

Edmund then roused the Northern chiefs to predatory excursions, but the energy of Canute prevented success. The Danes marched through Buckinghamshire to Bedford, and thence advanced to York. Uhtred, the earl of Northumbria, and the people, abandoned Edmund, and gave hostages to Canute.⁷³ Leaving his friend Eric Jarl in the government of the country, Canute returned to his ships. At this crisis, the death of Ethelred released England from its greatest enemy.⁷⁴

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⁷³ The Knytlinga Saga gives a particular description of Canute's exertions, interspersed with many quotations from the scalds, Ottar the Swarthy, Hallvarðr, and Thordr, 104—107. Among the nobles who came with Canute were, Ulfr Jarl, the son of Sprakalegs, who had married Canute's sister, Astrida. Heming, and his brother, Thorkell the Lofty, sons of the Earl-street Haralldr, were also in his army. Ib.

⁷⁴ We have a contemporary picture of the internal state of England during this reign, in the Sermon of Lupus, one of the Anglo-Saxon bishops.

"We perpetually pay them (the Danes) tribute, and they ravage us daily. They ravage, burn, spoil, and plunder, and carry off our property to their ships. Such is their successful valour that one of them will in battle put ten of ours to flight. Two or three will drive a troop of captive Christians through the country from sea to sea. Very often they seize the wives and daughters of our thanes, and cruelly violate them before the great chieftain's face. The slave of yesterday becomes the master of his lord to day, or he flies to the Viking, and seeks his owner's life in the earliest battle.

"Soldiers, famine, flames, and effusion of blood abound on every side. Theft and murder, pestilence, diseases, calumny, hatred, and rapine dreadfully afflict us.

"Widows are frequently compelled into unjust marriages;

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many are reduced to penury and are pillaged. The poor men are sorely seduced and cruelly betrayed, and, though innocent, are sold far out of this land to foreign slavery. Cradle children are made slaves out of this nation, through an atrocious violation of the law for little stealings. The right of freedom is taken away: the rights of the servile are narrowed, and the right of charity is diminished.

“Freemen may not govern themselves, nor go where they wish, nor possess their own as they like. Slaves are not suffered to enjoy what they have obtained from their allowed leisure, nor what good men have benevolently given for them. The clergy are robbed of their franchises, and stripped of all their comforts.”

After mentioning many vices, he adds, that “Far and wide the evil custom has prevailed of men being ashamed of their virtue; of good actions even incurring contempt; and of the public worship being publicly derided.” *Sermo Lupi ap. Hickes, Dissert. Epist. p. 99—106.* Elfric, another contemporary, thought the state of things so bad, that he believed dooms-day to be approaching, and the world very near its end. MSS. Vit. St. Neot.

CHAP. X.

The Reign of EDMUND Ironside.

AT length the sceptre of the Anglo-Saxons came into the hand of a prince able to wield it with dignity to himself, and prosperity to his people. Like Athelstan, he was illegitimately born; but his spirit was full of energy; and his constitution was so hardy, that he obtained the surname of Ironside. It was his misfortune that he attained the crown in a stormy season; and, before his character and talents could be duly known or estimated, he had to conflict with a king, perhaps greater than himself. Had Edmund, like his father, acceded to the crown of a tranquil, united, and thriving nation, the abilities of a Canute might have been foiled. But Edmund succeeded to the care of a divided people, half of whose territory was in the occupation of his enemy. He had no interval of respite to recruit his strength, or reform his country. He was dishonourably killed in the full exertion of his abilities.

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AN important struggle ensued between Edmund and Canute for the possession of London. It was long besieged in vain, sometimes by a part of Canute's forces, sometimes by all. Lon-

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don was at this time defended, on the south, by a wall which extended along the river.¹ The ships of Canute, from Greenwich, proceeded to London. The Danes built a strong military work on the south bank of the river, and drew up their ships on the west of the bridge, so as to cut off all access to the city. Edmund vigorously defended it awhile in person, and when his presence was required elsewhere, the brave citizens made it impregnable.²

DURING the siege, Edmund fought two battles with the Danes in the country: one at Pen in Dorsetshire; the other, the most celebrated, at Sceairstan, about midsummer.

Battle at
Sceairstan.

EDMUND selected the bravest soldiers for his first line of attack, and placed the rest as auxiliary bodies; then noticing many of them individually, he appealed to their patriotism and their courage, with that fire of eloquence which rouses man to mighty deeds. He conjured them to remember their country, their beloved

¹ Stephanides, in his description of London, written about 1190, so declares: "Similiterque ab austro Lundonia murata et turrita fuit." p. 3. Lond. 1723.

² Sax. Chron. 148.; Flor. 385.; and Knytlinga Saga, 135—137. The verses of the scalds, Thordr, and Ottar the Swarthy, are cited on this subject. Snorre gives an account of Saint Olave, the Norwegian sea-king, assisting in the struggle at London. The principal achievement of Olave was to destroy the fortified bridge from Southwark, which he calls a great emporium to the city, which the Danes defended. The effort, somewhat romantic, is sung by Ottar and Sigvatr. Saga af Olafi Helga, p. 11—13.

families, and paternal habitations: for all these they were to fight; for all these they would conquer. To rescue or to surrender these dear objects of their attachments, would be the alternative of that day's struggle. His representations warmed his soldiers, and in the height of their enthusiasm, he bade the trumpets to sound, and the charge of battle to begin. Eagerly his brave countrymen rushed against their invaders, and were nobly led by their heroic king. He quitted his royal station to mingle in the first ranks of the fight; and yet, while his sword strewed the plain with slaughter, his vigorous mind watched eagerly every movement of the field. He struggled to blend the duty of commander and the gallant bearing of a soldier. Edric and two other generals, with the men of Wilts and Somerset, aided Canute. On Monday, the first day of the conflict, both armies fought with unprevailing courage, and mutual fatigue compelled them to separate.³

IN the morning the awful struggle was renewed. In the midst of the conflict, Edmund forced his way to Canute, and struck at him vehemently with his sword. The shield of the Dane saved him from the blow, but it was given with such strength, that it divided the shield, and cut the neck of the horse below it. A

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³ Flor. Wig. 385, 386.

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crowd of Danes then rushed upon Edmund, and, after he had slain many, he was obliged to retire. Canute was but slightly ⁴ wounded. While the king was thus engaged, Edric struck off the head of one Osmear, whose countenance resembled the king's, and, raising it on high, exclaimed to the Anglo-Saxons, that they fought to no purpose. "Fly, ye men of Dorset and Devon! Fly, and save yourselves. Here is your Edmund's head."⁵ The astonished English gazed in terror. The king was not then visible, for he was piercing the Danish centre. Edric was believed, and panic began to spread through every rank. At this juncture Edmund appeared receding before the pressure of the Danes, who had rescued Canute. He saw the malice, and sent his spear as his avenger: Edric shunned the point, and it pierced two men near him. But his presence was now unavailing. In vain he threw off his helmet, and, gaining an eminence, exposed his disarmed head to undeceive his warriors. The fatal spirit had gone forth; and, before its alarms could be counteracted, the army was in flight. All the bravery and skill of Edmund could only sustain the combat till night interposed.⁶

⁴ I derive this paragraph from the Knytlinga Saga, p. 130. Ottar the Swarthy celebrates the battle, and places it near the Tees, p. 131., in Johnstone's *Celto Scandicæ*.

⁵ Flor. Wig. 386.

⁶ Ibid.

THE difficulty of the battle disinclined Canute from renewing it. He left the contested field at midnight, and marched afterwards to London to his shipping. The morn revealed his retreat to Edmund. The perfidious Edric, discerning the abilities of the king, made use of his relationship and early connection (he had married Edmund's sister, and had been his foster-father) to obtain a reconciliation. Edmund consented to receive him on his oath of fidelity.⁷

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EDMUND followed Canute to London, and raised the siege of the city. A conflict soon followed between the rivals at ⁸ Brentford. Both parties claim the victory.⁹ As Canute immediately afterwards beleagured London again, the laurel seems to have been obtained by him. Baffled by the defence, he avenged himself on Mercia, whose towns, as usual, were committed to the flames, and he withdrew up the Medway. Edmund again urged the patriotic battle at Otford in Kent, and drove him to Shepey. A vigorous pursuit might have destroyed all

⁷ It is the Knytlinga Saga which informs us that Edric had brought up Edmund: "Cujus tamen nutricius iste Heidricus fuit." p. 139.

⁸ Flor. Wig. 387. Sax. Chron. 149. The Knytlinga Saga quotes the verses of the scald Ottar on this battle, p. 134.

⁹ Florence and his countrymen give the victory to Edmund. The Knytlinga Saga says, Canute conquered; and adds, that the town was destroyed, p. 134.

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Canute's hopes; but the perfidious counsels of Edric preserved the defeated invader.¹⁰

WHEN Edmund withdrew to Wessex, Canute passed into Essex, and thence advancing, plundered Mercia without mercy. Edmund, earnest for a decisive effort, again assembled all the strength of England, and pursued the Dane, who was retiring to his ships with his plunder. At Assandun, in the north part of Essex, the armies met. Edmund arranged his countrymen into three divisions, and, riding round every rank, he roused them, by his impressive exhortations, to remember their own valour, and their former victories. He entreated them to protect the kingdom from Danish avarice, and to punish, by a new defeat, the enemies they had already conquered. Canute brought his troops gradually into the field. Edmund made a general and impetuous attack. His vigour and skill again brought victory to his arms. The star of Canute was clouded, when Edric, his secret ally, deserting Edmund in the very hour of success, fled from the field with the men of Radnor, and all the battalions he commanded. The charge of Canute on the exposed and inferior Anglo-Saxons was then decisive. The valour of Edmund was forgotten.

¹⁰ Flor. 387. Snorre mentions, that St. Olave fought at Canterbury; and quotes Ottar the Swarthy upon it, p. 14.; but I cannot be certain that it was at this period.

Flight and destruction overspread the plain. A CHAP. few, jealous of their glory, and anxious to give a X. rallying point to the rest, fought desperately Edmund Ironside. amid surrounding enemies, and were all cut off 1016. but one man. In this dismal conflict the flower of the nobility of England perished.¹¹

THE betrayed Edmund disdained the death of despair, and attempted new efforts to rescue his afflicted country. He retired to Gloucester; and, such was his activity and eloquence, that a fresh army was around him before Canute overtook him. Edmund then challenged Canute to decide their quarrel by a single combat.¹²

Edmund
challenges
Canute.

SOME authorities assert that they fought; others, that Canute declined the meeting; but the result was that a pacification was agreed upon between the princes; and England was divided between them. Canute was to reign in the north, and Edmund in the south. The

¹¹ Malmsb. 72. Flor. Wig. 388. Sax. Chron. 150. The Knytlinga Saga, and the scald Ottar, notice this conflict, p. 134. Snorre places one of St. Olave's battles in a place which he calls Hringmaraheide. He says, this was in the land of Ulfkell, p. 13. This expression somewhat approximates it to the battle of Assandun, for Ulfkell governed the eastern districts of the island; and Dr. Gibson places this conflict at Assington in Essex. Camden thought it was Ashdown, in the north part of that county.

¹² I follow Malmsbury in ascribing the proposal to Edmund, p. 72.

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rival princes exchanged arms and garments; the money for the fleet was agreed upon, and the armies separated.¹³

THE brave Edmund did not long survive the pacification. He perished the same year. The circumstances attending his assassination are variously given. Malmsbury mentions that two of his chamberlains were seduced by Edric to wound him at a most private moment with an iron hook; but he states this to be only rumour.¹⁴ The king's violent death, and its author, are less reservedly avowed by ¹⁵ others. The northern accounts go even farther. The Knytlinga Saga and Saxo carry up the crime as high as Canute. They expressly state that Edric was corrupted by Canute to assassinate Edmund.¹⁶

¹³ Flor. Wig. 389. Sax. Chron. 150.

¹⁴ Malmsb. 72.

¹⁵ As Hunt. 363.; Matt. West. 401.; Hist. El. 502.; Hist. Ram. 434.; Petrob. 37.; Ingulf, 57. and many others. Hermannus, who wrote within fifty years after this event, says, "Nocte siquidem sequentis dici festivitatis Sancti Andreæ Lundoniæ perimitur insidiis Edrici Streane perfidissimi ducis." Cotton Lib. MS. Tib. B. 2. The encomiast of Emma says, he was long and greatly lamented by his people. p. 171.

¹⁶ "Erat tunc temporis inter Anglos vir potens, Heidricus Striona nomine. Is a rege Canuto pecunia corruptus est ut Jatmundum clam interficeret. Hoc modo Jatmundus rex periit." Knytl. Saga, p. 139. To the same purpose Saxo, "Memorant alii Edvardum clandestino Canuti imperio occisum," lib. x. p. 193. Snorre says, "Eodem

A REMARKABLE character began his progress to greatness in this reign: this was the famous earl Godwin, who possessed a power little less than sovereign for three reigns, and whose son Harold was the last of the Anglo-Saxon kings. His origin has never yet been mentioned in English history; but as the rise of poverty to grandeur is always an interesting contemplation, we will state the short history of Godwin's elevations.

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Rise of
Earl God-
win.

THAT Godwin was the son of an herdsman, is a fact recorded in the MS. Chronicle of Radulphus Niger. This author says explicitly what no other has mentioned, "Earl Godwin was the son of an herdsman." It adds, that he was brought up by Canute,¹⁷ How the son of a Saxon herdsman came to be brought up by Canute, the note will explain.¹⁸

An herds-
man's son.

mense Heinrikus Striona occidit Edmundum regem." Olafi Helga, p. 24. Adam of Bremen says he was poisoned, p. 31.

¹⁷ It is a MS. in the Cotton Library, Vespasian, D. 10. In the second side of page 27., it says, "Godwinus comes filius bubulci fuit." It adds, "Hic Godwinus a rege Cnutone nutritus processu temporis in Daciam cum breve regis transmissus callide duxit sororem Cnutonis."

¹⁸ The Knytlinga Saga gives us that explanation which no other document affords,

One of the Danish chieftains, who accompanied Canute to England, has been noticed to have been Ulfr, the son of Sprakalegs, who had married Canute's sister Astrida. In the battle of Skorstein, between Canute and Edmund, he fought

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in Canute's first line, and pursued part of the English fugitives into a wood so eagerly, that when he turned to rejoin his friends, he saw no path; he wandered about it only to bewilder himself, and night involved him before he had got out of it. In the morning he beheld near him a full grown youth driving cattle to their pasture. He saluted the lad, and enquired his name: he was answered, "Gudin," or Godwin.

Ulfr requested the youth to show him the track which would lead him to Canute's ships. Godwin informed him that he was at a great distance from the Danish navy; that the way was across a long and inhospitable wood; that the soldiers of Canute were greatly hated by the country people; that the destruction of the yesterday's battle at Skorstein was known around; that neither he nor any soldier of Canute's would be safe if the peasants saw him; nor would the person be more secure who should attempt to assist an enemy.

Ulfr, conscious of his danger, drew a gold ring from his finger, and proffered it to the youth, if he would conduct him to his friends. Godwin contemplated it awhile; but that greatness of mind, which sometimes accompanies talents even in a lowly state, glowed within him; and, in an emanation of a noble spirit, he exclaimed, "I will not accept your ring, but I will try to lead you to your friends. If I succeed, reward me as you please."

He led Ulfr first to his father's humble mansion, and the earl received an hospitable refreshment.

When the shades of night promised secrecy, two horses were saddled, and Ulfadr, the father, bade the earl farewell. "We commit to you our only son, and hope, that if you reach the king, and your influence can avail, you will get him admitted into the royal household. Here he cannot stay; for, should our party know that he preserved you, his safety would be doubtful." Perhaps Ulfadr remembered the high fortunes of his uncle Edric, who was now duke of Mercia, and hoped that if his son could get a station in the royal palace, he might, like Edric, ascend from poverty to greatness.

Godwin was handsome, and fluent in his elocution. His

qualities and services interested Ulfr, and a promise to provide for him was freely pledged.

They travelled all night, and in the next day they reached the station of Canute, where Ulfr, who was much beloved, was very joyfully received. The grateful Jarl placed Godwin on a lofty seat, and had him treated with the respect which his own child might have claimed. He continued his attachment so far, as afterwards to marry him to Gyda, his sister. To oblige Ulfr, Canute, in time, raised Godwin to the dignity of Jarl. Knytlinga Saga, 105. and 131—133.

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CHAP. XI.

CANUTE *the Great.*

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CANUTE, from his warlike ability, sur-named the Brave; from his renown and empire, the Great; from his liberality, the Rich; and, from his devotion, the Pious¹; obtained, on Edmund's death, the sovereignty of all England at the age of twenty.²

THE Northerns have transmitted to us the portrait of Canute; he was large in stature, and very powerful; he was fair, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose was thin, eminent, and aquiline; his hair was profuse; his eyes bright and fierce.³

¹ Dr. Hickes's dedication to his Thesaurus. His baptismal name was Lambert. Frag. Isl. 2 Lang. 426.

² The Knytlinga Saga, and Olave Tryggvason Saga, state Canute to have been but ten years old at his father's death. If so, he could be only twelve at his accession. This is not probable. One document speaks more truly. Snorre, in his Saga af Magnusi Goda, states Canute to have been forty when he died. This was in 1035; and therefore in 1016, he must have been twenty-one. Snorre's words are, "Eodem autumnno vita functus est rex Knutus potens in Anglia idibus Novembris natus tunc annos quadraginta," c. iv. p. 7.

³ Knytlinga Saga, p. 148.

HE was chosen king by general assent; his partisans were numerous in the country, and who could resist his power? His measures to secure his crown were sanguinary and tyrannical; but the whole of Canute's character breathes an air of barbaric grandeur. He was formed by nature to tower amid his contemporaries; but his country and his education intermixed his greatness with a ferocity that compels us to shudder while we admire. In one respect he was fortunate; his mind and manners refined as his age matured. The first part of his reign was cruel and despotic. His latter days shone with a glory more unclouded.

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His first policy was against the children of Ethelred and Edmund. One of his scalds; Sighvatr, sings, that all the sons of Ethelred he slew or banished.⁴ The Saxon annalist assures us, that he determined at first to exile Edwig, the half-brother of Edmund; but finding the English nobles both submissive and adulating, he proceeded to gratify his ambition by taking the prince's life. The infamous Edric suggested to him a man, Ethelwold, a nobleman of high descent, who would undertake to accomplish his criminal desires. The king incited Ethelwold

⁴ Attamen singulos.

Deinceps filiorum Adelradi

Vel interfecit Cnutus

Vel proscripsit.

Sigvatr Knutzdrapu, quoted in Knytl. Saga, p. 140.

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to the measure. "Acquiesce with my wishes, and you shall enjoy securely all the honour and dignity of your ancestors. Bring me his head, and you shall be dearer to me than a brother."

This was the language of a northern vikingr, to whom human life was of no value. Ethelwold affected a compliance; but his seeming readiness was but an artifice to get the child into his power, and to preserve his life. Edwig did not ultimately escape. The next year he was deceived by those whom he most esteemed, and, by Canute's request and command, he was put to death.⁵

WITH the same guilty purpose, he seized Edward and Edmund, the children of the last king; but he was counselled that the country would not endure their destruction. Alarmed from immediate crime, he sent them to the king of Sweden, to be killed. This prince was too noble to be a murderer, and had them conveyed to Salomon, the king of Hungary, to be preserved and educated.⁶ One died; the other, Edward, married Agatha, the daughter of Henry, the German emperor; and their issue was Edgar Atheling, who will be remembered in a future reign.

CANUTE, reserving to himself the immediate government of Wessex, committed East Anglia to Turketul, whose valour had greatly con-

⁵ Flor. Wig. 390; 391.

⁶ Ibid. 391.

tributed to the subjection of England. He gave Mercia to Edric, and Northumbria to his friend Eric, the Norwegian prince. He made a public treaty of amity with the English chiefs and people, and by mutual agreement all enmities were laid aside. In the same year, the solemn compact was violated ; for he slew three English noblemen without a fault.⁷ He banished Edwig, the king of the peasants⁸, and divided the estates of the nobles among his Danish friends.

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THE punishment of Edric would have been a homage to virtue from any other person than Canute. The crime he prompted, he should not have punished. But it is an observation almost as old as human nature, that traitors are abhorred by their employers. In the first days of Canute's unsettled throne, he confirmed Edric in his Mercian dukedom ; but having used the profligate Saxon to establish his dignity, on the next claim of reward, he expressed his latent feelings. Edric imprudently boasted of his ser-

⁷ Sine culpa. Flor. 391. Mailros, 155. The Encomium Emmæ says, he killed many princes: "Multos principum quadam die occidere pro hujusmodi dolo juberet." The dolus here alleged was, that they had deceived Edmund. Their real crime may have been that they were powerful, and that their submission was dubious. Ingulf, 58. and the Annals of Burton, 247. mention some of Edric's friends as killed.

⁸ Ceopla cýnz. Sax. Chron. 151. qui rex appellabatur rusticorum. Flor. Wig. 390. Bromton says he was the brother of Edmund, 907. but I doubt that this is an error.

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Canute
the Great.

1016.

vices: "I first deserted Edmund, to benefit you; for you I killed him." Canute coloured; for the anger of conscious guilt and irrepressible shame came upon him. "'Tis fit, then, you should die, for your treason to God and me. You killed your own lord! him who by treaty and friendship was my brother! your blood be upon your own head, for murdering the Lord's anointed; your own lips bear witness against you." The villain who perpetrated the fact was confounded by the hypocrite who had countenanced it. Eric, the ruler of Norway, was called in, that the royal intention might be secretly executed. He struck down the wretch with his battle-axe, and the body was thrown from the window into the Thames, before any tumult could be raised among his partisans.⁹ The two sons of Ethelred, by Emma, were sheltered in Normandy.

1018.

CANUTE married Emma, called also Elfgiva, the widow of Ethelred. He distinguished his next year by a most oppressive exaction: from London he compelled 10,500 pounds, and from the rest of the kingdom 72,000.

To sooth the country, he sent home the largest

⁹ This narration is taken from Malmsb. 73. compared with Encom. Emmæ. The circumstances of his death are told differently, as usual. Florence admits that he was killed in the king's palace; but one says, that he was hanged; another, that he was strangled; another, that he was beheaded. Human testimony is characterised by these petty variations.

portion of his Danish troops, keeping only forty vessels in England. In this he displayed the confidence of a noble mind. He maintained an exact equality, between the two nations, in ranks, council, and war. In 1019, England was so tranquil, that he went to Denmark, and passed the winter in his native country.

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1018.

CANUTE maintained his dignity with a severe hand. In 1020, after his return from the Baltic, he held a great council in the Easter festivity at Cirencester. In this he banished the duke Ethelwerd. In 1021, he also exiled the celebrated Turketul.

IN this year the Anglo-Saxons obscurely intimate, that Canute went to Denmark, where he was attacked by Ulfr and Eglaf, with a fleet and army from Sweden. In one struggle Canute was unsuccessful; but afterwards the young earl Godwin attacked the enemies of Canute by surprise, with the English troops, and obtained a complete victory. This event raised Godwin and the English very greatly in the king's estimation.¹⁰

1025.

THE Eglaf was St. Olave, who had possessed himself of the kingdom of Norway. Canute, occupied by his English crown, made at first no pretensions to the Norwegian sceptre.¹¹ The submission of England gave him leisure to turn the eye of ambition to the mountains of Nor-

¹⁰ Sax. Chron. 154. Matt. West. 405.

¹¹ Snorre, vol. ii. p. 144.

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1025.

way.¹² Claims, those slight veils, with which states desirous of war always cover their unjust projects, to conceal their deformity from the giddy populace; claims adapted to interest the passions of vulgar prejudice, existed to befriend Canute. His father had conquered Norway; his relation, Haco, had been driven from it. Many of the people, who had most loudly welcomed St. Olave, had become dissatisfied at his innovations, and invited Canute to interfere.¹³

THE detail of the struggle between Canute and St. Olave need not be narrated here. Ulfr at first was among the enemies of Canute. He was afterwards pardoned and reconciled¹⁴; and, in the king's conflict with the Swedes, was the means of saving Canute's life.¹⁵

AT a feast in Roschild, Canute, according to Snorre, quarrelled with Ulfr at gaming. The indignant Jarl prudently retired. Canute taunted him on his cowardice for withdrawing. "Was I a coward when I rescued you from the fangs of the Swedish dogs?" was the answer of the irritated Ulfr. Canute went to his couch, and slept upon his resentment; but his fierce and haughty soul waked in the morning to demand blood. He sent his mandate, and Ulfr was stabbed in a church which he had¹⁶ entered.

¹² Snorre, p. 212.

¹³ Ibid. 212, 213.

¹⁴ See Snorre, 26—69.; and compare Saxo's account, 195, 196.

¹⁵ Snorre, 271, 272.

¹⁶ Ibid. 276, 277.

CANUTE descended so far beneath the courage of a hero, as to corrupt the subjects of Olave from their fidelity by money.¹⁷ Canute supported his insidious negotiations by a powerful fleet. Fifty ships of English thanes were with him, and every district in Norway which he approached, accepted him as its lord.¹⁸ He exacted for hostages the sons and dearest relations of the chiefs of Norway, and appointed Haco, the son of his friend Eric, to be the governor of his conquests.¹⁹

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ST. OLAVE retired before the storm, which he was unable to confront, and took shelter in Russia. Haco sailed to England for his wife; but he was doomed to visit Norway no more. The last time his ship was seen on its return, was, late in the day, off Caithness, in Scotland; a furious storm was raging, and the wind was driving him towards the Pentland Firth: neither the vessel nor any of its mariners appeared again.²⁰ In the next year, St. Olave returned; but perished from the insurrection of his subjects, whom he had offended by his laws to accelerate their civilisation.

1028.

IN 1031, Canute penetrated Scotland, and

1031.

¹⁷ Flor. Wig. 393. Theodoric, p. 29. Snorre, 278.

¹⁸ Snorre, 295.

¹⁹ Ibid. 296.

²⁰ Snorre, 321. Theodoric says, he was lost in the whirlpool of the Pentland Firth.

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the Great.
1031.

subdued Malcolm, and two other ²¹ kings. Snorre says, he conquered great part of it. ²²

CANUTE had the fame of reigning over six kingdoms. ²³ As a soldier he was certainly eminent; but, fortunately for his fame, a few incidents have been preserved concerning him, which rescue his character from the charge of indiscriminate barbarism, and claim for him the reputation of a lofty mind.

HE seems to have been one of those men, who feel that they are born to merit the approbation of future generations, and whose actions become sublimer, as their name seems likely to be perpetuated. He lived to posterity as well as to his country. It was in this strain, that having in a moment of intemperance killed a soldier, and by that criminal deed, violated a law which he had enforced on others, he assembled his troops, descended from his splendid throne, arraigned himself for his crime, expressed his penitence, but demanded a punish-

²¹ Sax. Chron. 154. Hen. Hunt. 364. A northern scald calls the kings, the two kings of Fife.

²² P. 144. The Knytlinga Saga adds, that he appointed his son Harald to govern his conquests. On the gigantic bones said to be found, 1520, in the place of the conflicts between Canute and Malcolm, they who think it worth while may read Stephanius's note on Saxo, p. 27.

²³ Saxo, 196.; and see Encom. Emmæ, 492. He prevailed on Conrad II. to restore to him the Margraviate of Sleswick; and the Eider then became the northern boundary of Germany. 1 Putt. Hist. 154.

ment. He proclaimed impunity for their opinions to those whom he appointed his judges ; and, in the sight of all, cast himself humbly on the ground, awaiting their sentence. A burst of tears, at his greatness of soul, bedewed every spectator. They respectfully withdrew to deliberate, as he had required, and at last determined to let him appoint and inflict his own punishment. The king accepted the task. Homicide was at that time punishable by a mulct of forty talents. He fined himself three hundred and sixty, and added nine talents of gold as a further compensation.²⁴

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the Great.
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THERE is something in the incident of the sea, which discovers a mind of power, looking far beyond the common associations of mankind. Canute had conquered many countries. In an age of valour and enterprize, his exploits had equalled the most adventurous. Poets embodied in their melodies the admiration of his people, and directed to his heart those praises, with which all Europe resounded. Encompassed with flattery and subjection, Canute's mind may have been swollen into temporary presumption. Hé may in the frenzies of vanity have fancied, like an Alexander, that he was scarcely a mortal. But his mind was too powerful to continue the slave of his conceit. The more he gazed on nature, the more he felt the adorable Being

²⁴ Saxo, 199.

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who governed him, as well as his people; the more he was humbled with the conviction of his individual insignificance. To communicate his solemn sensations, with all their impressions, to his adulating friends, he ordered the chair of his dignity to be placed on the sea beach. His courtiers formed around him; the tide was undulating to the shore, and Canute seated himself before it. "Ocean, the island on which I sit is mine, and thou art a part of my dominion. None of my subjects dare to resist my orders; I therefore command thee, that thou ascend not my coasts, nor presume to wet the borders of my robes."

IN vain the mandate issued. He was not the master whom the waters revered; and in contempt of his authority, every wave drew nearer to his feet, till the general elevation of the ocean covered his legs with its billows. It was then that he expressed the noble sentiment, which was impressing his mind. "Let every dweller upon the earth confess that the power of kings is frivolous and vain. He only is the Great Supreme, let HIM only be honoured with the name of Majesty, whose nod, whose everlasting laws, the heavens, the earth, and sea, with all their hosts, obey." In conformity to this sublime feeling, Canute would never afterwards wear his crown.²⁵

²⁵ I have stated this incident from Matt. West. p. 409.; Hen. Hunt. 364.; Rad. Dic. 469.; Higden and Bromton.

AMONG the kingly qualities in which Canute strove to excel, his liberality was ²⁶ distinguished. Master of the tributes of several kingdoms, his resources were equal to the munificence of his heart. His journey from Flanders to Rome was a stream of expensive generosity. Whoever approached him was fed and cherished without a request.²⁷ Canute's presents in general had three objects; charity, literature, and public services.

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XI.
Canute
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1031.

THE literature of his age was in the hands of two very different bodies of men; the clergy and the scalds. Both have extolled his liberality.²⁸ Of the scalds who attended him, the names and verses of many have survived to us. Sighvatr, Ottar the Swarthy, Thordr Kolbeinson, and Thorarin Loftunga, are among those whose historical poems or panegyrics have been much cited by Snorre in his northern history.²⁹

THORARIN was celebrated for the richness and celerity of his muse. He gave a striking specimen of this faculty. He had made a short poem

²⁶ Knytlinga Saga, 145.

²⁷ Ibid. 144, 145. Encomium Emmæ, 173.

²⁸ For his donations to the church, see Matt. West. 404, 405. 409.; Encom. Emmæ, 173.; and others. In mentioning his resources from his kingdoms, the Knytlinga Saga gives to our country the praise of that superior affluence which it seems, in every age, to have displayed: "inter omnes septentrionales terras, opum ac thesaurorum Anglia facile sit ditissima," p. 146.

²⁹ In the second volume passim. Sighvatr was the son of Thordr, a scald. Snorre, 45.

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on Canute, and went to recite it in his presence.

On approaching the throne, he received a salute, and respectfully inquired if he might repeat what he had composed. The king was at table at the close of a repast; but a crowd of petitioners were occupying their sovereign's ear by a statement of their grievances. The impatient poet may have thought them unusually loquacious: he bore the tedious querulousness of injury with less patience than the king, and at last, presuming on his general favour with the great, exclaimed, "Let me request again, Sire, that you would listen to my song; it will not consume much of your time, for it is very short."

The king, angry at the petulant urgency of the solicitation, answered, with a stern look, "Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared—to write a *short* poem upon me! Unless by to-morrow's dinner you produce above thirty strophes, on the same subject, your head shall be the penalty." The poet retired—not with alarm, for his genius disdained that, but with some mortification at the public rebuke. He invoked his Scandinavian Muses: his mind became fluent; verses crowded on it; and before the allotted time, he stood before the king with the exacted poem, and received fifty marks of pure silver as his reward.³⁰

³⁰ Knytlinga Saga, 146, 147. Snorre mentions this shortly, p. 297. The poet afterwards, in his Tugdrapa, sung the present. See the stanza in Knytl. p. 147. His short poem

As private anecdotes best display the real character, another may be permitted ; and perhaps it will be most picturesque to give it in the words of the recording eye-witness. It occurred upon Canute's journey to Rome, at St. Omer's.

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“ Entering the monasteries, where he was received with great honour, he walked humbly, he fixed his eyes on the ground with wonderful reverence ; and pouring out (if I may say so) rivers of tears, he implored the aid of the saints. But when the moment came of presenting his gifts upon the altar, how often did he impress the pavement with his kisses ! how often did he strike his venerable breast ! what sighs ! what prayers that he might not be found unworthy of the mercy of the Supreme ! At length his attendants stretched forth his munificent oblation, which the king himself placed on the altar. But why do I say *the* altar, when I remember that I myself saw him go round every part of the monasteries, and pass no altar, however small, on which he did not leave a present, and which he did not salute. Then came the poor, and were all separately relieved. These and other bounties of the lord Canute, I your slave ! Oh, St. Omer, St. Bertin, myself beheld in your monasteries ; for which do you pray that

was of the kind which Snorre says, “ we call Flok.” The longer was of the sort called Drapa. Snorre, p. 297. He gives a long specimen of the Drapa, p. 298, 299. and a specimen of the Flok, p. 303.

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1051.

such a king may live in the heavenly habitations, as your servants, the canons and monks, are daily petitioning.”³¹

THIS incident is inserted, because it affords a striking contrast to some actions of Canute’s earlier life. A Dunstan might have acted such a scene for its theatrical effect. But in the proud master of so many conquered kingdoms, the emotions must have been those of his mind and heart.

CANUTE has himself described his journey to Rome in a public document, addressed to all the orders of the English nation³²: he says, he went for the redemption of his sins, and the welfare of his subjects; that he had projected it before, but had been hindered by business and other impediments. He adds:

“BE it known to you, that there was a great assembly of nobles at the Easter solemnity, with the lord the pope John, and Conrad the emperor.³³ There were all the princes of the people, from Mount Gargano to the sea, who all received me with dignity, and honoured me with valuable presents. I was particularly honoured with various gifts and costly presents from the emperor, as well with gold and silver

³¹ Encomium Emmæ, 173.

³² This letter of Canute’s is in Flor. Wig. 394—397.; Ingulf, 59—61.; and Malmsb. p. 74, 75. Its substance is stated in Matt. West. 407., and elsewhere.

³³ He was the fourth emperor after Otho the Great.

vessels, as with very rich apparel. I spake with the emperor, the pope, and the princes, on the necessities of my English and Danish subjects, that a more equal law, and better safeguard, might be granted to them in their journies to Rome; that they might not be hindered at so many fortified passages, nor oppressed by such unjust exactions. The emperor assented, and Rodolph, the king³⁴, who rules most of the passages, and all the princes established, that my subjects, whether merchants or travellers from piety, might go and return to Rome without detention or exaction.

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“ I ALSO complained before the pope, and expressed myself highly displeased that such an immensity of money should be extorted from my archbishops when they came to Rome for the pall. It was declared that this should not happen again.”

CANUTE, after mentioning that these concessions were ratified by oaths before four archbishops, twenty bishops, and an innumer-

³⁴ In Florence he is called Rodolph; so in Malmsb. 74. But in Ingulf, both in Gale's edition, p. 60., and that of Frankfort, p. 893, he is named Robert. The difference is not merely verbal. Rodolph was the king of Burgundy; and Robert, the son and successor of Hugh Capet, was the king of France. But as the clausuræ, or fortified passages, of which Canute speaks, were probably those of the Alps, which Rodolph commanded; and as Robert died in 1030, and Canute's journey is usually placed in 1031, there can be no doubt that Rodolph is the right reading.

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able multitude of dukes and nobles, exclaims :
“ Therefore, I return my liberal thanks to Almighty God, that all things which I desired, I have prosperously achieved as I had contemplated, and have fulfilled all my wishes.”

IN the subsequent paragraphs of his public letter, he alludes nobly to his former conduct. In viewing his past actions with sentiments of regret, and in publicly confessing that he intends an amendment, he displays a greatness of mind which kings of such successful ambition have seldom reached. Canute is an instance, rarely paralleled, of a character improved by prosperity. His worst actions were in his days of peril. When the full glory of established and multiplied power shone around him, his heart became humble, pious, and ennobled. Educated among vikings, his first misconduct may be referred to his tuition. His latter feelings were the produce of his improved intellect and magnanimity.

“ BE it also known to all, that I have vowed to Almighty God, to govern my life henceforward by rectitude, to rule my kingdoms and people justly, and piously to observe equal judgment every where ; and *if, through the intemperance and negligence of my youth, I have done what was not just, I will endeavour hereafter, by God's help, entirely to amend it.* Therefore I beseech and command all my consiliarii, to whom I have confided the councils of my kingdom,

that they in no shape suffer or consent to any injustice throughout my realm, neither from fear of me, nor from favour to any person of power; I command all the sheriffs and governors of all my realm, as they value my friendship or their own safety, that they impose unjust violence on no man, whether rich or poor; but that the noble and their inferiors, the wealthy and the needy, may enjoy their property justly. This enjoyment must not be infringed in any manner, neither in behalf of the king, nor any other man of power, nor on the pretext of collecting money for me, because there is no necessity that money should be obtained for me by unjust exaction."

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AFTER alluding to some enemies whom he had pacified, and mentioning that he was returning to Denmark, whence, as soon in the summer as he could procure shipping, he proposed to visit England; he continues:

"I have sent this letter first, that all my people may rejoice in my prosperity, because, as you yourselves know, I have never forborne to apply myself and my labour, nor will I ever forbear to devote either, to the necessary utility of all my people."

THESE patriotic sentiments, from a royal pen, are highly valuable. Such kings give new splendor to their thrones, and secure to themselves that perpetuity of fame which mortality so covets.

CHAP. XII.

*The Reign of HAROLD the First, surnamed
HAREFOOT.*

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the First.
1035.

CANUTE, at his death¹, left three sons, Svein, Harold, and Hardicanute. In his life, he had placed Svein over Norway², and he wished that Harold should rule in England, and Hardicanute in Denmark. At the council which met at Oxford to elect a new sovereign, the opinions were divided. The chiefs of Danish descent and connections chose Harold; the West Saxons, headed by earl Godwin, preferred his brother Hardicanute, because his mother, Emma, had been the wife of Ethelred, and was a favourite with the Anglo-Saxons. The children of Ethelred who were in Normandy were also remembered; but the Danish dynasty was not yet unpopular, and Harold, by force or influence, obtained a portion of the kingdom, and seized the treasures which Emma possessed from

¹ He died at Shaftesbury, the 12th of November, 1035. MS. Tib. B. 1.

² Snorre, *Saga Olafi Helga*, p. 383. Florence calls his mother Northamtunensis Alfgivæ filiæ Alfhelmi Ducis, p. 398. Snorre names her Alfiso dottor Alfrims Jarls.

the gift of Canute.³ Harold, at first, reigned at London and north of the Thames; and Hardicanute in the west of England.

CHAP.
XII.
Harold
the First.

THE murder of Alfred, one of the sons of Emma, by Ethelred, lies heavy on the memory both of Harold and Godwin.⁴

1035.

HAROLD, though nominated king, could not

³ Flor. Wig. 398. MS. Sax. Chron. Tib. B. 1. It is said of Harold, that he was not Canute's son, but a cobbler's. The tale is, that his mother, having given no children to Canute, pretended pregnancy, and introduced first Svein, and afterwards Harold, as her own children. As Snorre does not mention it of Svein, it is probable that in both cases the rumour was the offspring of malignant competition. The author of Enc. Em., though he believes it, adduces only the plurimorum assertio for it, which is a better description of a rumour than of a fact. Florence states it as a res in dubio.

⁴ I state this from the Encomium Emmæ. The author addresses his account to the mother herself, by whose orders he wrote it. (See his prologue.) He apologises to her for his brevity on Alfred's sufferings, and says, "Possent enim multa dici si non tuo parceremus dolori," p. 175. Considering, however, that he wrote to the youth's mother, he is sometimes horribly particular, for he describes part of their progress of operation. Malmsbury says, the deed took place between Harold's death and Hardicanute's election, p. 77.; but this cannot prevail against the contemporary above cited, strengthened as it is as to its occurrence under Harold, by Flor. 399.; Matt. West. 410.; and Hoveden, 438. Two of these make 600 men to have perished. The printed Saxon Chronicle has nothing of it. The MS. Tib. B. 1. give a long account of it. It thus mentions the fate of the companions: "Ðu gefepan he to þaƿ 7 ƿume mƿlice ofƿloh, ƿume hi man ƿiþ ƿeo ƿealde, ƿume hƿeoplice ac ƿealde, ƿume hi man benbe, ƿume hi man blenbe, ƿume hamelobe, ƿume hættobe." It adds, "Ne ƿearþ þƿeopliepe ðæb gebon on thiƿon eaƿbe ƿƿththan Ðena comon."

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the First.
1035.

obtain from the archbishop the regal benediction, because the children of Emma were alive. The archbishop, instead of committing to Harold the crown and sceptre, placed them on the altar, and forbad the bishops to give their benediction.

THIS conduct produced the effects which might easily have been foreseen. Harold despised the benediction as useless, and contracted a hatred against the Christian religion, and the children of Emma. When others were attending divine service, he called out his hunting dogs, or studied to occupy himself in some contemptuous pursuit. To get the youths, so imprudently set against him, into his power, he forged a letter to them in their mother's name, inveighing against himself, and desiring one to come to her to be counselled as to his conduct. The answer of the princes from Normandy expressed their obedience, and appointed a day and place. At the time so named, Alfred, the youngest, chose his military companions, and sailed. His waiting enemies too eagerly pressed on him when about to land, and he sailed to another part, still unconscious of the deceit. Godwin, now become a courtier to Harold, met him in the garb of friendship, and with the mockery of oaths. The innocent youth followed him to Guildford; there his warlike friends were artfully separated into little bands of ten, twelve, or twenty, to be more conveniently entertained at different houses. A few only remained with

the prince. Food and wine were profusely given to all, till they sought the bed of rest; then the agents of Harold furtively took away their arms, and in the morning bound them in chains. Their fate was decided by a bloody decimation; the tenth man only was left unmurdered.

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Harold
the First.
1035.

THE betrayed Alfred was hurried to the Isle of Ely. Vile judges were appointed over him, who directed his eyes to be taken out. The shocking scene was closed by his death. Emma withdrew to Bruges.⁵ By Hardicanute's absence in Denmark, Harold obtained all England.⁶ He died in 1040, and was buried at Westminster.

⁵ Enc. 176. The author's account of Bruges, shows it to have been then of commercial importance. Emma's name was also Elfgiva.

⁶ Ingulf, 61. Flor. 400. marks 1037 as the year when this occurred. So the MS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4.

CHAP. XIII.

The Reign of HARDICANUTE.

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Hardi-
canute.

1040.

THIS reign demands but few sentences. He had sailed the preceding year from Denmark to his mother, Emma, at Bruges. On Harold's death he was invited to the English crown; and he came with purposes of such degrading revenge, that he even caused the body of Harold to be dug up, decapitated, and thrown first into a marsh, and afterwards into the Thames. A fisherman found and the Danes buried it in a cemetery which they had in London.¹ Such actions fix the stain of barbarism on the persons who counsel and the age which permits them.²

HARDICANUTE oppressed England with impositions which occasioned great misery. In-

¹ Flor. 402. Matt. West. 402. The MS. Chron. Tib. B.1. This MS. contains many paragraphs in this reign not in the printed chronicle.

² Even the age of Hardicanute condemned his cruelty: "Unde in singulorum ore hominum de eo haberi imprecatus ut tantæ crudelitatis non diu abesset animadversio."—Reg. Abb. MS. Cotton Lib. Claudius, C.9. Malsbury, p. 76., mentions it with disapprobation.

surrection followed, and military execution at Worcester added a dreadful catastrophe.³

He projected to punish Godwin for Alfred's murder; but the Dane had a passion which predominated over his fraternal feeling; and the present of a splendid vessel, profusely gilt, and rowed by eighty men in sumptuous apparel and splendid armour, having each on his arm two golden bracelets, weighing sixteen ounces, expiated the crime of Godwin.⁴ He displaced a bishop for joining in the cruelty, who appealed to the same master passion, and escaped.⁵

It was, however, a laudable trait of fraternal affection in Hardicanute, that he welcomed the arrival of his half-brother Edward in 'England. The son of Ethelred was a more grateful object to the English, than the son of a foreign conqueror. In caressing so kindly a brother so dangerous, Hardicanute displayed a virtue in which an Athelstan was wanting.

His health was frequently assailed by disease⁷; but he ended his two years' reign by an act of intemperance, at a nuptial feast at Lambeth: a copious draught, as he stood in the mirthful company, occasioned him to fall sense-

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³ Flor. Wig. 403. MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. Matt. West. 413. Malmsb. 76.

⁴ Flor. Wig. Matt. West.

⁵ Malmsb. 77.

⁶ Malmsb. 76. Flor. Wig. 403.

⁷ Ob morbos etiam quos frequenter patiebatur. Guil. Pict. 179.

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less to the ground. He spake no more. He died in June, and was buried with Canute at Winchester.⁸

His death separated the crowns of England and Denmark; and Magnus, the king of Norway, obtained the Danish sceptre.

⁸ Flor. Wig. 403. Ingulf, 62. MS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. contain passages on his death not in the printed Chronicle.

CHAP. XIV.

The Reign of EDWARD the Confessor.

THE Danish line had now become unpopular: the factions, which the administration of Dunstan had at first excited, had ceased, and a new generation had arisen. The nation inclined again to its ancient line, and Edward, the surviving son of Ethelred, and at that time in England, was chosen to be king. While Edward and his brother were friendless exiles, Godwin was their enemy, and even projected their assassination; but became the zealous partisan of Edward, and eagerly assisted to introduce him to the throne, when Canute's issue failed.¹ The king was induced to marry Editha, the daughter of Godwin²; but was neither ardent

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Confessor.
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¹ Ingulf, 62. Malmsbury states at length a sort of bargain which Godwin made with Edward, before he supported him, 80.

² Ingulf knew her, and describes her as very beautiful, meek, modest, faithful, virtuous, and the enemy of no one. She had none of the barbarism of her father and brothers. She was even literis apprime erudita, a lady of learning. He adds, "I have very often seen her, when only a boy, I visited my father in the royal court. Often as I came from

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in his connubial nor filial attentions. At no long period after his coronation, he went, with three earls, suddenly to his mother, and spoiled her of all the property which she possessed.³

EDWARD was at first menaced with the competition of Magnus, the king of Norway, who had subdued Denmark into obedience. Magnus sent letters to Edward⁴, claiming the crown, and Edward assembled a great fleet at Sandwich to dispute his landing.⁵ Embarrassed by a rival for his Danish sceptre, in Svein, the son of Ulfr, Magnus resolved not to risk the enterprise.⁶

SVEIN requested the aid of Edward against Magnus; and Godwin, whose first patron had

school she questioned me on letters and my verse; and, willingly passing from grammar to logic, she caught me in the subtle nets of argument. I had always three or four pieces of money counted by her maiden, and was sent to the royal larder for refreshment," p. 62. But even this fair rose, as the chroniclers call her, was stained with blood. See further.

³ Flor. 404. Sax. Chron. 157. In the Appendix to the Saxon dictionary, a fragment of a Saxon chronicle is quoted E. Cod. MS. G. Lambardi exarata in Bib. Ecc. Chr. Canterb. The fragment begins with Edward's reign. It is not the same with the printed one, nor with the two MSS. in the Cotton Library. I shall quote it as Lamb. MS.

⁴ As the successor of Hardicanute. Snorre magnesi Goda, c. 38, 39.

⁵ Lamb. MS. Sax. Chron. at Cambridge.

⁶ "I think it," he declared, "right and most convenient that I should let Edward enjoy his crown, and content myself with the kingdoms which God has given me." Snorre, p. 52.

been Svein's father, urged that fifty ships should be sent to him. But as Magnus was known to be well skilled in maritime affairs, the earl Leofric and the rest of the council opposed it as unadvisable.⁷ Magnus soon drove out Svein from Denmark, but died much lamented the same year.⁸ Svein then obtained the Danish crown; and Harald Hardrada, who afterwards perished in his invasion of England, the son of Sygurd Syr, and by his mother, the brother of St. Olave, succeeded in Norway.⁹ Harald is highly extolled for his wisdom.¹⁰ He sent letters of friendship to Edward, whose amicable answer established peace between their kingdoms. Thus passed over the disturbing question between England and the Baltic states. Edward and his council wisely suffered the hostility to die quietly away. Hence Svein's second application for assistance against Harald, though again supported by Godwin, was negatived by the good sense of Leofric and the community.¹¹

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⁷ Flor. 406, 407. Lamb. MSS.

⁸ Lamb. MSS. Snorre says, that he dreamt that his father appeared to him, saying, "Choose, my son, whether you will become my companion immediately, or live long the most powerful of kings, but by the commission of a crime that can never be expiated." The choice of Magnus was perplexed, but he decided with discreet virtue. "Father! do you choose for me."—"Be with me," was the answer of the vision. Snorre adds, that he awoke, told his dream, and afterwards died. Har. Hard. c. 28.

⁹ Snorre, c. 30, 31. Flor. 407.

¹⁰ Snorre, c. 36.

¹¹ Flor. 407.

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THE character of Edward was amiable for its gentleness and kindness, and laudable for its piety; but it did not unite strength of mind with these interesting qualities. There is a simplicity in his exclamation to the low peasant who had displeased him, "I would hurt you if I were able," which almost implies imbecility. Men of rank and power, however inferior in understanding, know sufficiently their means of aggression against those of meaner condition who offend them. That Edward, when angry enough to desire to punish, should suppose that, although king, he had not the power, displays an ignorance of his authority that is not reconcilable with his intellect. But as he reigned with more virtue, so he had better fortune than his father. His mild and equitable government was so popular, that a festival is said to have been annually celebrated in England, to express the national joy at the deliverance from the Danish kings.¹² His provinces were under the administration of men of talents appointed by his predecessors.¹³ The unanimity of the country gave effect to their measures. England again became respected abroad, and no foreign power attempted to disturb its tranquillity.

BUT a new cause of internal discussion and contest, and ultimately of a great revolution, was silently rising up from preceding events.

¹² Spelman, Gloss. Voc. Hocday.

¹³ Malmsh. 79.

The marriage of Ethelred to a princess of Normandy; the residence of this king during his exile, and of his children afterwards, at that court; Canute's subsequent marriage with this lady; and Edward's education in the same country, had raised an attachment to the Norman manners and nation, not only in Edward's mind, but in those of the nobles who had resided abroad with his father and himself, or had visited them in Normandy.

THE Frankish nation had rapidly improved since the reign of Charlemagne. The effects of the Roman civilisation were extensive and permanent, and the ardent zeal of the Christian clergy, had greatly contributed to humanise and soften their martial fierceness. The unwarlike characters of the successors of Charlemagne had tended to increase the civilising spirit. The Normans, from their contiguity, partook of the melioration of the French manners, and to Edward's milder temper these were peculiarly congenial. The Anglo-Saxons could not have been equally improved by the ruder Danes. Hence Edward found at first more that he could sympathise with in Normandy than in England, and therefore invited or admitted many Normans into his favour. Robert, one of them, was made, after various promotions, archbishop of Canterbury. Another was raised to an episcopal see, others also attained offices of rank and power. From the king's partiality, the

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BOOK VI. French manners came into use; their language, and their legal forms began also to be diffused.¹⁴
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THE Norman favourites awakened the jealousy of Godwin, and were obstacles to his ambition. But the counteracting power of Leofric, the wise earl of Mercia, and of Siward, the earl of Northumbria, and distinguished for heroic valour, kept Godwin tranquil till a cruel violence of one of the noble foreigners gave him a popular reason for expressing his discontent.

1051.

It was in 1051, that Godwin presumed to give defiance to the king. The count of Boulogne, who had married Edward's sister, came to Dover. In a foolish effort to obtain or compel entertainment, his followers killed an Englishman. The citizens revenged it; the count, committing himself to the guidance of blind fury, rushed with his troops, killed many of both sexes in the city, and trampled some children under the feet of their horses. Provoked at his brutality, the people armed. The count cowardly fled before their indignation, and went to Edward, who was then at Gloucester.¹⁵

AVAILING himself of this event, Godwin raised immediately, from his own counties of Kent, Sussex, and Wessex, a military power. The same occasion enabled his son Svein to collect a

¹⁴ Ingulf, 62.; and see Malmsbury, 80., on the enmity between Godwin and the Normans.

¹⁵ Flor. 410.

powerful force from the counties of Oxford, Gloucester, Hereford, Somerset, and Berks, which he governed; and Harold, another son, embracing the same pretext, completed his formidable array by a levy from Essex, East Anglia, Huntingdon, and Cambridgeshire, which he commanded.

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THE armies of Godwin and his children could not be completed without Edward's knowledge. Messengers were immediately sent to his brave protectors, Leofric and Siward. These governors were earnestly desired to come, with all the forces they could assemble, with immediate speed.

THE loyal earls hastened immediately to court. Learning the necessity, they sent swiftly-circulated orders through all their counties, for armies to be raised. The son of the culpable count did the same; and Edward had a prospect of being rescued from the tyranny of Godwin.¹⁶

THE rebellious family marched into Gloucestershire, and demanded of the king, under a menace of hostilities, the count of Boulogne and his followers, and the Normans and men of Boulogne, who were in Dover-castle.

THE king, terrified, knew not how to act; he fluctuated in great anxiety, till he learnt that his friends were prepared to support him. An express refusal was then returned to Godwin.

¹⁶ Flor. Wig. 410, 411.

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A FIERCE civil war seemed now about to consume the country; but Godwin was not heroically adventurous, and Leofric was wise. Leofric therefore proposed that hostages should be exchanged, and that Godwin and the king should meet on an appointed day in London, and have the alleged subject judicially determined by the *witena-gemot*.¹⁷

THE proposition was too popular not to be accepted. Godwin returned to Wessex; the king ordered a *witena-gemot*¹⁸ to be assembled for the second time in London, at the autumnal equinox; he augmented his army, and marched it to London. Godwin and his sons occupied Southwark, but soon discovered that their partisans were falling away.

THE *witena-gemot* made the thanes, who were with Harold, to find pledges to the king for their conduct, and outlawed Svein, who did not think fit to be present at the *wither-male*, or conciliary meeting.¹⁹ They also cited Godwin and Harold to attend the *gemot*. Godwin, finding his ambitious views darkening, and dreading a legal enquiry into his conduct, did

¹⁷ Flor. Wig. 411, 412.; and see Sax. Chron. 163, 164.; and the MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4.

¹⁸ *Tha ȝe pædbde ȝe cýning ȝ hȝ pȝtan tha man ȝeolbe othpe ȝýchan habban ealpa ȝepitena ȝemot on Lundene to hæpfeſter emnihte.* Sax. Chron. 164.

¹⁹ *ȝ man borhpæſt tham cýning ealle tha thæȝnar the pæpon þapolbeſ eoþleſ hȝ ȝuna, &c.* MS. Tib. B. 4. and Lamb. MS.

not attempt to face the witena, but fled in the night.²⁰

IN the morning, the king held the witena gemot, and declared him, his army, and his children, to be outlaws.²¹ Five days of safety were given them to quit the country.²² With three of his sons, Godwin sailed away, with all the property he could hastily amass, into Flanders. Harold, and a brother from Bristol, sailed to Ireland. A severe tempest put their lives in peril during the voyage. Their sister, the queen, was sent to a monastery.²³

CONTRARY to every natural expectation, and to his own, and to the astonishment of the Anglo-Saxons, the house of Godwin seemed now to have fallen for ever in England.²⁴ Released from his intimidations, the king became more attached to his Norman friends. Invited or obeying a sagacious policy, William, the reigning Duke of Normandy, came to England with

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²⁰ Sax. Chron. 164. Flor. Wig.

²¹ ȝ ȝe cýnȝ hæfð tha on morȝen Wítēna Gemot ȝ cƿæth hine utlage ȝ ealle hepe; hine ȝ ealle hȝr ſuna. MS. Tib. B. 4.

²² Sax. Chron. 164. ȝ ȝceapebe him mann 5 nihta ȝƿið ut of lande to ſapenne.

²³ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. Flor. 412.

²⁴ The MS. Tib. B. 4. thus expresses the public surprise at the change: "Thæt ƿolbe thýncan ƿunboplic ælcum men the on Englalande ƿær ȝif ænȝ man æƿ tham ȝæbe tha hit ȝƿa ȝeƿurtha ȝceolbe. Forþham he ƿær æƿ to tham ȝƿithe upahæfen ȝƿýlce he ƿeolbe thær cýnȝer ȝ ealler Englalander," &c.

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a large company of his nobles and knights at this period, and was received with great honour and courtesy by Edward, who entertained him for some time, conducted him to his cities and royal castles, and loaded him with presents when he returned.²⁵ This visit was of importance to William. It introduced him to the knowledge of many of the English chiefs, and made his name familiar to the people. It began the formation of that interest which so powerfully assisted him in afterwards acquiring the crown. But Ingulf declares that no mention was made of his succession to the crown at this visit, nor had he then any hope of it. Yet it may have excited William's desire to enjoy such a crown, and must have made a lively impression on his memory.

EDWARD was then living without a prospect of issue; and, excepting one youth in Hungary, the crown had no heir. The family of William was connected with that of Edward by marriage, and with Edward himself by friendship and services. William was a neighbour, and Edward esteemed him. The family of Godwin was abased, and no competitor seemed likely to arise from the rest of the English. William therefore from this time could scarcely contemplate the throne of his friend, without coveting its acquisition. Any valued good which seems bending to our reach, soon excites our cupidity.

²⁵ Flor. 412. Ingulf, 65. The MS. Tib. B. 4. mentions his coming, which the printed Chronicle omits.

He may have had the prudence to mark the hopeful ground in judicious silence; but the scheme of his succession must have been a project which his mind revolved, and secretly prepared to execute.

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THE family of Godwin in their exile meditated new attempts to regain their power. Harold and his brother invaded the West of England with a fleet of adventurers collected in Ireland, defeated the king's officers, and plundered as they pleased. As Godwin was impending with a similar armament, a chosen force of forty ships was stationed at Sandwich to intercept it. He eluded their vigilance, reached Kent, and roused all his friends in the neighbouring counties to arm in his behalf. But the king's fleet pursued him. He sheltered himself in Pevensey; a storm checked the progress of the others, and when they made for London, he hovered about the Isle of Wight, where Harold joined him, after a voyage of plunder. With their united strength, swelled by every aid they could allure, they sailed to Sandwich. Edward found his friends more tardy than before. Other nobles became dissatisfied at the progress of the Normans in the king's favour; and Godwin proceeded, with successful enterprise, to the Thames, and reached Southwark. He demanded the restoration of his family. His numbers and secret connections were formidable; and to save the shedding of civil blood,

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1052.

Stigand, the archbishop, and the wise men, urged an accommodation. Their recommendation prevailed. The Normans beheld their fate sealed in the pacification, and fled in consternation.

A GREAT council was then convened out of London, and all the earls, and the best men that were in the land, attended it. Godwin there purged himself before the king, his lord, and all the assembly, that he was guiltless of the crime of which he had been suspected. The king received him in full friendship, and granted to him and to his family a complete restoration of their honours. The Normans were all legally outlawed. Svein was the only one of the exiled family who received no benefit from the revolution of its fortunes. He had foully murdered his cousin Beorn, with every aggravated circumstance of abused confidence, and treacherous falsehood. There is a sting in murder which goads the consciousness long after the world has forgiven it, and which no increase of prosperity can destroy. Svein, though six years had passed away since his crime, found it still his torment; and to sooth his sensations, he set off with naked feet on a walking pilgrimage from Flanders to Jerusalem. He died, on his return, in Lycia.²⁶

1053.
Godwin's
death.

THE remark of the Hebrew poet, that man

²⁶ Sax. Chron. 167, 168. Flor. Wig. 414.

disquiets himself for a vain shadow, is often verified in human history. A life is sacrificed to suffering, that a favourite object may be gained. We reach the seat of the felicity we have sighed for, and while our arms are extended to grasp it, we are received into the grave. Godwin experienced this mutability in human affairs. He had scarcely, by great toil and hazard, achieved his restoration, and recovered his prosperity, when he was deprived of it soon afterwards by death. In 1053, at the Easter festival, the eventful changes of his life were closed. As he sat with the king at table, it is said, that the conversation turned on Alfred's murder, and that Godwin, with many sacred appeals to Divine Providence, denied that he was concerned in it.²⁷ But whatever was the preceding discourse, the attack of fate was as irresistible as unexpected. He suddenly lost his speech, and fell from his seat. Harold and two other sons raised him, and carried him to the king's chamber, hoping a recovery. He lingered in helpless and miserable agony, from Monday to Thursday, and then expired.²⁸

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²⁷ Ingulf, 66. Malmsb. 81. Hunt. 366.

²⁸ Flor. Wig. 415. The MS. Tib. B. 4., like the printed chronicle, merely states his death; but the MS. Tib. B. 1. describes it like Florence, thus: "Sæt he mid tham cýnincge æt ȝeþeopðe tha pæpinga ȝah he niþer ȝith thær ȝotȝetleȝ ȝppæce benumen ȝ ealpe hiȝ mihte ȝ hine man tha bƿæb into thær kinges bupe ȝ thohtan tha hit oƿerȝan ȝceolbe ac hit

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1055.

It is recorded with pleasure, by the annalists, that Edward took off the heavy tax called Dane gelt.²⁹ Ingulf ascribes the remission to the extreme dearth which raged in 1051, and in which so many thousand people perished. Touched with compassion for their sufferings, the king abolished the tax. It is added, that the royal mind, according to some rumours, was impressed the more deeply upon the subject, because one day, when the collected tax was deposited in the treasury, the king was brought to see the vast amount: the mass so affected his imagination, that he fancied he saw a little devil jumping exultingly about it.³⁰ His mind was certainly weak enough to believe such a fancy; and many about him were interested to frame some device that should give it a foundation. He ordered the money to be restored to its former owners, and no more to be raised on such an assessment.

THE Welsh had often molested the English provinces in their vicinity. In 1049, thirty-six ships of Irish pirates entered the Severn, and, with the help of Griffith, king of South Wales, obtained considerable successes.³¹ In 1052,

nær na ssa ac thuph punobe ssa unspcende 7 mihtelear
fopth och thone thunper bæz 7 tha hī līf alet."

²⁹ Flor. Wig. 410. Hoveden, 441.

³⁰ Ingulf, 65. Hoveden tells a similar story, and makes the queen and her brother Harold the persons who took the king to the treasury.

³¹ Flor. Wig. 409.

Griffith ravaged great part of Herefordshire, defeated the provincials, and obtained great plunder.³²

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the
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1053.

THE death of Godwin rather exalted than abased his family. His character was tainted. He was approaching the feebleness of age, without having secured its reverence. He had no influence but from his power; and greatness, which is only secured by terror, or extorted by force, is the creature of casualty, which the first tempest may destroy. But Harold had all the brilliancy of youth and active courage: his character was full of promise, because, being born to dignity, he had sullied himself by no arts to attain it. There was a generous ardour in his actions which compelled admiration. When Edward raised him to his father's dignities, he gave new lustre to his family, and obtained all the influence to which his father had aspired.³³

WHEN Harold received the honours of Godwin, his own dignities in Essex and East Anglia were given to Algar, the son of the deserving and patriotic Leofric. But Algar's rise to power was no pleasing omen to the family of Godwin. Within less than three years afterwards he was made a victim by being banished without a fault.³⁴

1055.

³² Flor. Wig. 412.

³³ The great wealth of the family may be seen in Domesday book, where Godwin's possessions are often mentioned.

³⁴ Flor. 416. MS. Tib. 1. Butan ælcan gylte, and MS.

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1053.

BUT Algar was too injured to be inactive: he fled to Ireland, collected eighteen piratical vessels, and interested Griffith, the king of Wales, in his favour. With this aid, he suddenly appeared in Hereford with great success; and though Harold went to oppose him, yet such was the state of Edward's court and councils, that Algar, though rather by violent than legal measures, regained his patrimony and power. His allies went to Leicester, and were remunerated by his father. In 1058, he was exiled again, and by the same means restored.³⁵ The great were now dividing into new factions.

THE Welsh made several efforts against the Anglo-Saxons in this reign. - If any other feeling than personal ambition had actuated the British leaders, they must have discerned, that however feeble the Saxon king's government, from the new political parties, may have been, yet, from the comparative state of the two nations, transient depredations were the utmost that the valour of Wales could achieve. Such bounded triumphs were, however, certain of being followed at last by a powerful revenge. Griffith, for some years, molested, with good fortune, the counties near Wales, and for some years his aggressions escaped unchastised. In

Tib. B. 4. *for neh buzan gylte* The printed chronicle says, that he was charged with treason, p. 169. Ingulf gives to Algar the aid of a Norwegian fleet, p. 66.

³⁵ Flor. 417—420.

the year after he first reinstated Algar, his new insults, which occasioned the death of Harold's priest, just raised to a bishopric³⁶, were again connived at by a peace; and in 1058 he again restored Algar; but in 1063 Harold resolved to repress him, and there was nothing to restrain the full exercise of his ability. He marched into Wales with adequate force; Griffith fled; Harold burnt his palace and ships, and returned. In the beginning of summer he circumnavigated Wales with a marauding fleet, while his brother Tostig marched over it by land. The Welsh submitted with hostages and tribute, and banished the obnoxious Griffith, who soon after perished.³⁷

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THE means by which Harold obtained such immediate and decisive success are stated to have been a change of the armour of his soldiers. In heavy armour, the Saxons were unable to pursue the Welsh to their recesses. Harold observed this impediment to their success, and commanded them to use leathern armour and lighter weapons. By this arrangement, wherever the Britons could retreat, his men could

³⁶ Flor. 418. The MS. Tib. B.1. says of this bishop, that he would forego his spiritual arms, and take to his sword and spear, and go against Griffith: "Se foplet hī cūpman 7 hī hroðe, hī gārlican pæpna 7 feng to hī sƿepe 7 to hī sƿeopbe, æfter hī bircuphade, 7 sƿa fop to fýrbe on gearon Grifþin," &c.

³⁷ Flor. 424. Ingulf, 68. MS. Lamb. Sax. Chron. 170. The head of Griffith was brought to Harold.

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Confessor.
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pursue. He crossed their snowy mountains, defeated them on their plains, and spread destruction around, till terror and feebleness produced general subjection.³⁸ He raised heaps of stones wherever he had obtained victory, with this inscription: "Here Harold conquered." Such a depopulation of Wales ensued from his invasion, that to this disastrous cause Giraldus ascribes the tranquil acquiescence of the Britons under the Norman yoke.³⁹ Harold closed his efforts by a law, that every Briton found beyond Offa's Dike with a missile weapon, should lose his right hand.⁴⁰

Macbeth
defeated
by Siward.

MACBETH, the usurper of Scotland, condemned, by the genius of Shakspeare, to share for ever our sympathy and our abhorrence, was partly contemporary with Edward. In 1039, Duncan, after a five year's reign, was assassinated by Macbeth.⁴¹

THE two sons of Duncan, Malcolm surnamed Cean-more, or the Great-head, and Donald,

³⁸ Ingulf, 68. This invasion is fully stated by the elegant John of Salisbury, whose writings reflect so much credit on the twelfth century. See his *De Nugis Curialium*, lib. vi. c. 6. p. 185.

³⁹ Giraldus Cambriensis de *Illaudab. Walliæ*, c. vii. p. 431.

⁴⁰ Joan. Salisb. de *Nugis Cur.* p. 185.

⁴¹ Mailros, 156. Duncan, in 1035, had been foiled in an attack upon Durham. *Sim. Dun.* 33. Lord Hailes says: "It is probable that the assassins lay in ambush, and murdered him at a smith's house in the neighbourhood of Elgin." *Annals*, p. 1.

called Bane, or the Fair, fled from Scotland. CHAP.
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Confessor.
Malcolm sought refuge in Cumberland, and
Donald in the Hebrides.⁴²

ELEVEN years after his usurpation, Macbeth is mentioned by the chroniclers of England, as distributing money at Rome.⁴³ In 1054, while Macduff, the thane of Fife, was exciting a formidable revolt in Scotland, the celebrated Siward, by some called the Giant, from his large size, and whose sister had been Duncan's queen, conducted his Northumbrians against Macbeth. A furious conflict followed, in which thousands of both armies perished; but Siward, though he lost his son and nephew, defeated the usurper. He returned with great plunder, having made Malcolm king.⁴⁴

1054.

THE glory of a warrior was the felicity most precious to Siward. On his return, at York, he felt that an internal disease was consuming his vital principle, and he sighed for the funereal trophies of a field of battle. "I feel disgraced

⁴² Haile's Annals of Scotland, p. 2.

⁴³ "1050. Rex Scotorum Machethad Romæ argentum spargendo distribuit." Flor. Wig. 409. So Sim. Dun. 184. and Hoveden, 441. Mailros, who names him Macbeth, p. 157., has a similar passage.

⁴⁴ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. Lamb. MS. Flor. Wig. 416. MS. Tib. B. 1. Lord Hailes, from Fordun, states, that "Macbeth retreated to the fastnesses of the North, and protracted the war. His people forsook his standard. Malcolm attacked him at Lunfanan in Aberdeenshire. Abandoned by his few remaining followers, Macbeth fell 5th of December, 1056." Annals, p. 3.

BOOK VI. Edward the Confessor. that I should have survived so many combats, to perish now like a cow: clothe me in my mail, fasten on my sword, and give me my shield and my battle-axe, that I may expire like a soldier."⁴⁵

1057. IN 1057, England lost Leofric, the duke of Mercia, by whose wisdom the reign of Edward was preserved from many perils and disorders, which the ambition of others would have introduced. His councils and government have been much celebrated.⁴⁶ His son Algar succeeded to his dukedom.⁴⁷

ON Siward's death, in 1055, Tostig, the brother of Harold, was appointed earl of Northumbria. By inducing the queen to cause some Northumbrian nobles to be treacherously killed; by repeating the same atrocity himself at York, and by exacting a large tribute from the county; Tostig so alienated the minds of the provincials, that they revolted in 1065, expelled him, and seized his treasures. The insurgents invited Morcar, the son of Algar, and chose him for their earl. At the head of the men of Northumberland, Morcar marched

⁴⁵ Rad. Dic. 477.

⁴⁶ Flor. Wig. 419. Ingulf, 66.

⁴⁷ Leofric had another son, named Hereward, whose life seemed devoted to the task of supplying incidents to the genius of romance and heroic song.—See a further account of him in the chapter on the Anglo-Saxon chivalry, in the third volume of this work. Hereward is also mentioned in the book de Pontificibus, 3 Gale, 372.

southward, and was joined by an armed force from other counties, and from Wales. Harold met him at Northampton with military array, but it was deemed prudent to comply with a request so powerfully supported; Morcar was confirmed in the earldom, and the laws of Canute were restored. Tostig fled with his wife and friends to Flanders, where Baldwin entertained them.⁴⁸

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EDWARD, whose passive and peaceful disposition seems to have left his nobles to their own quarrels without any interposition from himself, soon after these transactions began to sicken. At Christmas, he held his court in London, and dedicated the church of St. Peter at Westminster, which he had rebuilt. On the eve of the Epiphany, his malady assumed a fatal aspect, and he was buried the day following at Westminster.⁴⁹

1066.

In person, Edward was tall and well made; his hair and skin were remarkably white; his complexion rosy.⁵⁰ His mind was gentle, if not weak; but in general, unless acted upon by others, his disposition was well meaning.

⁴⁸ See the printed Saxon Chronicle, p. 171. Flor. Wig. 427. the MS. Chronicles, Tib. B. 1. and B. 4.

⁴⁹ MS. Tib. B. 1. and 4.; Flor. Wig. 427.; and Sax. Chron. 171. Both the MS. Chronicles have a long addition in Saxon, which follows his death. It begins, "Dep Eðgarð kingc, Engla hlaford, gende sothfeste," &c. This is not in Lamb. MS.

⁵⁰ Malmsh. 91. Rossi Hist. Reg. Angl. 105.

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He was averse to the imposition of taxes; abstinent in his diet; and on the public feast days, though by the care of the queen he was sumptuously arrayed, he assumed no haughtiness of manner in his pomp. His piety was sincere and fervent. His time was chiefly divided between his prayers and hunting, to which he was greatly attached. His charities were frequent and extensive⁵¹; and though his reign displayed no intellectual energies, and reflected no honour on his ancestry, he was so fortunate as to escape any striking disgrace.

⁵¹ Malmsb. 91. His memory was canonized, and many monkish miracles have been appended to it.

CHAP. XV.

The Reign of HAROLD the Second, the Son of GODWIN; and the last of the ANGLO-SAXON kings.

EDWARD had intended to appoint his cousin Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, the successor to his crown. This prince had continued in Hungary since Canute had sought his life. Called from thence by Edward the Confessor, he came to England in 1057, but died soon after his arrival.¹

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THE death of this prince confirmed in two men the hopes of attaining the Anglo-Saxon sceptre. Harold, and William duke of Normandy, after this event, looked forward to the splendid prize with equal ardour.

Competi-
tion be-
tween
Harold
and Wil-
liam.

HAROLD had sworn to William to assist him in ascending the throne of England; but afterwards pleaded that his oaths had been extorted by irresistible force, as William, having had him in his power, compelled him to swear. This charge thus repelled, the rivals were in

¹ Flor. Wig. 449.

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other respects on a level. Both claimed from Edward a gift or testamentary appointment in his favour²; both had been in Edward's friendship, and the family of Harold, as well as the family of William, had been connubially allied to him.

THERE is perhaps no great event in our an-

* That Harold was appointed by Edward to succeed him, is asserted or intimated by the printed Saxon Chronicle, 172. By Flor. Wig. 427. Hoveden, 447. Sim. Dun. 194. Al. Bev. 122. Malmsbury informs us that this was the statement of the English (*Angli dicant a rege concessum*, 93.) but he thinks it was rather the rumour of partiality than of judgment. On the other side, the *Annales Margenses*, p. 1.; Wike's Chron. p. 22.; Malmsb. 93.; and the Norman writers, declare, that Edward gave the kingdom to William. The MS. Chronicles which affirm this are, Peter de Ickham, Domit. A. 3. (*Willo duci Normanniæ consanguineo suo sicut ei prius juramento promiserat regnum teste dedit*. So Will. Sheepheved, Faust. B. 6. (*adoptavit in regnum Willielmum ducem Normannorum*.) So Th. Elmham, Claud. E. 5. (*Willielmum ducem Normanniæ adoptavit heredem*.) So Hermannus says, it was the rumor plurium that Edward appointed the kingdom to William. Many other MS. Chronicles affirm as much, as Chron. ab adv. Sax. ad Hen. 4. Nero, A. 6.; Chron. S. Martini de Dover a Bruto ad Hen. 2. Vespasian, B. 11.; Chron. de Bruto ad 1346. Cleop. D. 2.; Chron. de Hale's ab initio mundi ad 1304. Cleop. D. 3.; *Annales de Gest. Angl.* ad 1377. Cleop. D. 9.; *Hist. brevis.* ending temp. Ed. 2. Domit. A. 8.; the *Hist. Abb. Claud.* B. 6. We may add the words of William himself, who, in one of his charters, says: "*Devicto Haraldo rege cum suis complicitibus qui michi regnum prudentia domini destinatum et beneficio concessionis domini et cognati mei gloriosi regis Edwardi concessum, conati sunt auferre.*" Faustina, A. 3. The authorities are too contradictory to decide the question,

nals in which the truth is more difficult to be elicited, than in the transaction between Harold and William in the lifetime of Edward. We will state first the account of Harold and his friends, and contrast it with the Norman story.

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IN revolving the history of the friends of Harold, we meet with the unpleasing circumstance of two narrations upon the subject, which counteract each other. According to some, Harold accidentally sailed in a little fishing excursion from Bosham in Sussex, and was driven, by a sudden tempest, on the opposite ³ shore. According to others, Harold went to the continent not accidentally, but deliberately. Two of his brothers had been committed by Edward, during the rebellion of Godwin, to the care of William. Harold wished to procure their release, and for that purpose is said to have requested permission of Edward to visit William in Normandy. The appendage to this account is, that Edward dissuaded him in vain; and that when Harold returned, and stated to him that William had detained and made him swear to give him the English crown, the king reminded him, that he had foreseen the misfortune.⁴

³ Matt. Paris, p. 2. Matt. West. 426.; and from him Bever. in his MS. Chron. in the Harleian Library, 641. Malmsbury mentions it as a report.

⁴ Eadmer, 4. Al. Bev. 125. Sim. Dun. 195. Bromton, 947. Rad. Dic. 479. Walt. Hemingford, 456. I believe

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THE Norman historians declare, that on the death of the son of Edmund Ironside, who had been invited from Hungary, Edward obeyed the dictates of personal regard, and appointed William to be his successor; that he sent Harold to announce to him this disposition, and that Harold, sailing to Flanders for the purpose of travelling to the Norman court on this important mission, was thrown by a tempest on the coast of the count of Ponthieu, who seized and imprisoned him.⁵

To these circumstances it is added, that before Edward sent Harold, he had commissioned Robert the Norman, the archbishop of Canterbury, to make to William the same annunciation.

THIS last assertion however cannot for a moment be believed, because Robert was exiled from England in the year 1052, on Godwin's reconciliation. He went to Normandy not on public business, but fled with precipitation to secure his personal safety⁶; and so far was Edward from having adopted William in 1052;

Hemingford's Chronicle to be the same with the Chronica Will. de Giseburne, in the Cotton Library, Tiberius, B. 4. Higden, 283.

⁵ Ingulf, a contemporary writer, p. 68. Guil. Pictav. 191. Will. Gemmet. 285. Orderic. Vital. 492. Ann. Petrob. 45. Walsingham Ypod. 28. Wike's Chron. 22. and many of the MS. Chronicles.

⁶ Sax. Chron. 168. and the fuller Chronicle quoted there, 167. Hoveden, 443.

that in 1057, the son of Edmund Ironside came to England on Edward's express invitation, and for the avowed purpose of being his successor. It is also hostile to the tale of Robert's mission, that William was himself in England after Godwin's rebellion, the year before Robert left it. If Edward had then determined on William's succession, it is more probable that he should have imparted his intention to William himself; than that in the next year he should have sent it in a message by a fugitive. The testimony of Ingulf of Croyland is also adverse. He expressly declares, that while William was in England, he received no hopes of the succession; it was not then mentioned.⁷ Robert may have exerted himself in nurturing William's secret wishes. He may, in revenge to the family of Godwin, have commenced intrigues in favour of William; but it is not credible that Edward thought of William as his successor until after the death of his cousin from Hungary.

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⁷ De successione autem regni spes adhuc aut mentio nulla facta inter eos fuit. Ingulf, 65. Ingulf describes himself as born in England, and as having studied at Westminster and Oxford. When William visited Edward, Ingulf joined his train, and sailed with him to Normandy; he became his secretary and a sort of favourite. He went to Jerusalem through Germany and Greece, and returned by sea to Rome. He says, that he and his companions went out thirty fat horsemen, and returned scarcely twenty, and emaciated pedestrians. He attended William to England, 73—75.

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The tapes-
try of
Bayeux.

THE celebrated tapestry of Bayeux presents to us the Norman account of these transactions.

IN the cathedral church of Bayeux in Normandy, this ancient monument has been preserved: "The ground of this piece of work is, a white linen cloth or canvass, one foot eleven inches in depth, and 212 feet in length. The figures of men, horses, &c. are in their proper colours, worked in the manner of samplers, in worsted, and of a style not unlike what we see upon China and Japan ware; those of the men more particularly being without the least symmetry or proportion."⁸ It is in one piece; it was annually hung up and exposed to view, in the nave of the church, from the eve of Midsummer-day, and continued there for eight days. At all other times it was carefully locked up.⁹

THIS tapestry is called, by the tradition of the

⁸ Ducarel's Anglo-Norman Antiquities, p. 79. M. Lancelot has written two memoirs on this tapestry, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. ix. p. 535—561.; and tom. xii. p. 369—469. M. Lancelot's description is thus: "C'est un piece de toile de lin de dix neuf pouces de haut, sur deux cens dix pieds onze pouces de long, sur la quelle on a tracé des figures avec de la laine couchée et croisée a peu pres comme on hache une premiere pensée au crayon," p. 370.

⁹ Lancelot, p. 371. Ducarel, 79. This tapestry is still at Bayeux. At the commencement of the war, after the peace of Amiens, while the invasion of these islands was in agitation, Bonaparte had this tapestry conveyed to Paris, for his own inspection. A comet having appeared about that time, he is said to have observed, with great earnestness, the comet represented in the tapestry.

country, "La toilette du duc ¹⁰ Guillaume." The same popular account ascribes it to his queen, Mathilda, and her work-women.¹¹ It has been engraved, and may be seen among the plates of the Academie des Inscriptions, and in Ducarel's Anglo-Norman Antiquities.

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It represents the transactions between Harold and William. The first figures are, a king with a sceptre sitting upon his throne; his right hand is pointed towards two men, as if giving them orders. Above is an inscription of two words, "Edward. Rex."¹² This has been fairly thought to portray Edward, directing Harold to go to Normandy. It therefore illustrates the Norman account, that Harold was sent by Edward to William.¹³

THE next figures are, five men on horseback, preceded by a cavalier with a bird in his left hand, and with five dogs running before him,

¹⁰ Lancelot, 371. This gentleman says of it: "L'extrémité commence a se gater." This occasioned the Chapter to have it copied.

¹¹ Lancelot, 373. William of Poitou declares, that the English ladies excelled at their needle, and in gold embroidery. Ib. 375. Lancelot thinks, "qu'elle ne peut etre d'un siecle posterieur a celui de Guillaume," 374. Mathilda died in 1083. Ib. 377.

¹² Lancelot, 378.

¹³ Il faut observer la simplicité du trone du roi Edward semblable a celle que nous representent les sceaux et les autres monumens qui nous restent de ces tems la. Les bras du trone sont terminez par une tete de Chien — Ceux des empereurs d'Allemagne avoient ordinairement un Lion. Son sceptre est terminée en fleuron, p. 541.

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The inscription to this is, "Ubi Harold dux Anglorum et sui milites equitant ad Bosham." The dogs and the bird mark the cavalier to be a nobleman, and of course to be Harold, who is proceeding with his train to Bosham.¹⁴

A CHURCH follows, before which are two men with bending knees. Above is the word "Ecclesia." After this is an apartment where men are drinking, one from a horn, another from a goblet.

Two men are descending from this place of refreshment, one of them with an oar. A person with an oar is standing next. Another holds a dog in his arm, looking towards a ship, close to which is Harold, with a dog under his arm, and a bird in his left hand. The inscription is, "Hic Harold mare navigavit." It of course represents Harold embarking at Bosham in Sussex.¹⁵

Two ships follow in full sail. The remark of Lancelot is just, that in their equipments they are not at all like fishing vessels. The words are, "Et velis vento plenis venit in terra Widonis Comitiss."

¹⁴ The tapestry has sustained some injury at the beginning of this inscription. Lancelot, 378. "C'etoit alors l'usage de la noblesse de marcher ou en equipage de guerre quand il y avoit quelque expedition a faire ou en equipage de chasse quand la guerre ne l'occupoit point — La noblesse seule avoit le droit de porter l'Epervier ou le Faucons sur le poing," p. 543.

¹⁵ Walter Mapes informs us of the punning trick by which Godwin got Bosham from the archbishop of York. See it in Camden and Lancelot, p. 545.

THE next figures represent Harold becoming the prisoner of Guy, the count of Ponthieu, who carries him to Belre¹⁶, and detains him. The inscriptions will explain the figures which follow: "Here Harold and Guy converse; here the messengers of William came to Guy; here a messenger comes to William; here Guy conducted Harold to William, duke of the Normans; here William proceeds with Harold to his palace."

THIS part of the tapestry portrays the history as given in the chronicles. When Harold was detained by Guy, on whose coasts the winds impelled him, he sent information to William, whose menaces and gifts produced his¹⁷ release.

¹⁶ This was, says M. Lancelot, Beaurain le Chateau, two leagues from Monstreuil, *castrum de Bello ramo*, p. 555. *Le Roman de Rou* par Robert Waice, est le seul des Auteurs de ce tems la qui, en rapportant la circonstance de la prison de Harold a Beaurain, confirme ce qu'en dit le monument dont il s'agit :

"Guy garda Heralt par grant cure,
 Mout en creust mesaventure,
 A Belrem le fit envoyer
 Pour fere le Duc esloingnier," p. 379.

¹⁷ In the tapestry, William is on his throne, with his sword in his left hand, his right is extended close to the face of a man, who is listening or speaking to him in a deprecating and intimidated manner. Lancelot says, "deux vers du *Roman de Rou* expriment ce que le Duc faisoit en cette occasion :

"Tant pramist au Comte et offri,
 Tant manacha et tant blandi,
 Que Guy Heralt au Duc rendi."

THAT William conducted Harold to Rouen, the chief city of his dominions, is the assertion of a contemporary chronicler.¹⁸ The tapestry says, to his palace, and exhibits a kind of hall, where a chief upon his throne, resting one hand on his sword, is attending to a person in the attitude of speaking, behind whom are some armed men. It is most likely Harold addressing William on the subject of his excursion; but there is no inscription on this part of the tapestry.

THE next figures represent William's warfare with Conan, a count of Bretagne, in which Harold assisted.¹⁹ The inscriptions are: "Here duke William and his army came to Mount St. Michael, and passed the river Cosno²⁰; here Harold duke drew them from the sand; and they came to Dol, and Conan fled. Here the

Ce sont les menaces qu'il semble que la tapisserie a voulu designer, p. 381.

¹⁸ Guil. Pictav.

¹⁹ See Lancelot, 388—401, on William and Harold's war in Bretagne. William of Poitiers is the only historian who has at all detailed this warfare, "mais il s'en faut beaucoup que son recit ne soit aussi circonstancié que ce qui se voit dans la tapisserie," p. 389. Lancelot's Observations on the weapons of the combatants are worth reading.

²⁰ C'est la riviere de Couesnon qui separe encore a present la Normandie de la Bretagne. Lan. 396. Les flots de la mer et les sables font changer souvent le lit de cette riviere, ce qui rend le gué difficile. La Tapisserie represente le passage de cette riviere par les troupes de Guillaume avec une exactitude tres détaillée. Ib. 397.

soldiers of duke William fought against the CHAP.
Dinantes²¹, and Conan extended the keys.” XV.
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ALL these circumstances are very expressively told by appropriate figures, which give a curious delineation of the military equipments and manners of the period.

THE events which follow are peculiarly interesting to us. William, in complete armour, extends one hand to Harold's right temple; his other is upon Harold's right arm and breast. Harold is a little inclining towards him, and supports a lance with a banner in his left hand. The words above are, “ Here William gave arms to Harold.” A Norman historian mentions, that William rewarded the exertions of Harold with splendid arms, horses, and other ²²insignia.

AFTER three horsemen in armour, with the letters, “ Here William comes to Bagias,” (Bayeux) William appears without armour on his throne with a sword, his left hand extended. Near this are two repositories of relics. Harold is between them, with a hand on each. Officers are at both ends. The inscription is: “ Here Harold swears to Duke William.”

THE historians state, that Harold swore to

²¹ This circumstance the tapestry only has preserved, “ C'est la prise de Dinan ville de Bretagne a six lieues de Dol: aucun historien du tems n'en a parlé.” Lan. 399.

²² Order. Vital. lib. iii. p. 492. Le Roman de Rou places the ceremony at Avranches (Aurences) when the duke was going to Bretagne. Lan. 402.

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promote William's accession to the throne of England on Edmund's demise, to marry his daughter, and to put Dover into his ²³ power. Some other authorities mention that William, after Harold had sworn, uncovered the repositories, and showed him on what relics he had pledged himself; and Harold saw, with alarm, their number and importance.²⁴ If this be true, these two great warriors were, at least in their religion, men of petty minds, or they would not have believed that the obligation of an oath was governed by the rules of arithmetical progression.

THE tapestry represents a ship under sail, expressive of Harold's return, and afterwards Harold making his report to Edward. The king's sickness and funeral follow.²⁵

THE next figures show Harold's coronation. One man offers him the crown; another a

²³ Guil. Pictav. says this on the evidence of eye-witnesses: "*Sicut veracissimi multa que honestate præclarissimi homines recitavere qui tunc affuere testes,*" p. 191. He is so angry with Harold for his subsequent breach of this oath, that he apostrophizes to him with great warmth, p. 192. Both Pictav. and Ord. Vital. 492. place the oath before the war in Bretagne. On the oath see Ingulf, Malmsb., M. Paris, Eadmer, and others.

²⁴ So the Roman de Rou, and la Chronique de Normandie affirm. Lanc. 404, 405. I may here mention that the author of the Roman is stated to be Robert Waice; that he lived about fifty years after the conquest, and was a canon of Bayeux. Lan. 379.

²⁵ The figures of the funeral seem to precede the sickness.

battle-axe. Beyond this, Harold appears on his throne, with the globe and cross in his left hand, and a sceptre in his right. On his right two men are presenting to him a sword; and Stigand, the archbishop, is standing on his ²⁶ left.

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ON the evening of Edward's funeral, which was the day after his death, Harold possessed himself of the crown of England. As there were other pretenders to the dignity, of whom one at least, Edgar Etheling, the grandson of Edmund Ironside, was invested with the interesting right of hereditary descent, delay was perilous to the ambition of Harold.²⁷ Hence, while the nobles were agitated with divided minds, Harold boldly decided the splendid question by availing himself of the support of his friends²⁸, and by obtaining an instantaneous

Harold's
 coronation.
 1067.

²⁶ The inscriptions are: "Here they gave the crown to king Harold: here sits Harold, king of the English; Stigand, archbishop."

²⁷ Matthew says, some of the procures favoured William; some Harold; and some Edgar, the grandson of Edmund Ironside; but that Harold, extorta fide a majoribus, obtained the diadem, 433. Malmsbury intimates a violent seizure, p. 93. So Rudborne, p. 24. Ordericus says, he was consecrated sine communi consensu aliorum præsulum et comitum procerumque, p. 492.; and see Matt. West. 433. and M. Paris, 2.

²⁸ Florence, Hoveden, Simeon of Durham, Rad. Dic. and Saxon Chronicle, imply, that a very large part, if not all, of the nobles chose him. The tapestry, which certainly tells the story in the Norman way, hints nothing of a violent seizure. It represents two men offering the crown to Harold, who is uncovered.

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coronation from the suspended archbishop of Canterbury.²⁹

THAT Harold used his authority with kingly dignity, and for the great ends of public utility, is asserted³⁰, and must be admitted, with the qualification that as his reign was so short, the panegyric must be referred to his intentions rather than to his actions. It is, however, essential to an usurper to be popular; and human ingenuity cannot invent a spell more potent to arrest the favour of its contemporaries, than the practice of virtue. All rulers, whose right to power is ambiguous, and whose possession of it depends on the public support, will affect to govern awhile with equity and popularity. The true character of Harold cannot therefore be judged from his actions in the emergency of competition; and he perished before the virtues of his disposition could be distinguished from those of his convenience.

It is amusing to remark how industrious the chroniclers of this period have been to record, that a comet appeared this year in the heavens, and that it foreboded the revolutions of great-

²⁹ Though most of the writers say that the archbishop of York crowned him; yet, as the tapestry shows Harold on his throne; and Stigant, who held Canterbury, near him; and as Guil. Pictav. 196. and Ord. Vitalis, state that Stigant crowned him, I adopt this opinion, which M. Lancelot supports, 421.

³⁰ As Hoveden, Florence, and others. Malsbury, 93, admits it.

ness, and the bloodshed which ensued.³¹ The popular impression produced by this comet is shown by its having been worked in the tapestry of Bayeux. This relic of ancient times contains, immediately after Harold's coronation, a rude figure of the comet, with several persons gazing at it with eager eyes and pointing hands.³²

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THE enjoyment of a favourite felicity is seldom the consequence of its violent acquisition. Harold found his crown full of the thorns which poets and moralists have been fond of describing. Three competitors prepared at the same time to wrestle with him for it: each was formidable enough to have endangered his prosperity, but the combination of their hostilities could have hardly failed to overpower him.

THE rivals of Harold were, his brother Tostig, William duke of Normandy, and Haralld Hardrada, the king of Norway. The two last were sovereigns of long established authority and great military experience; and came with peculiar advantage into a conflict with Harold,

³¹ Will. Gem. p. 285.; Matt. West. 439.; and many annalists. I believe that above ninety comets have been remarked in the heavens.

³² The inscription over the men is: *Isti mirant stella.* The MS. Chronicles, Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. thus mention the comet: "Tha peapthgeond eall Engla land spyle tacen on heofenum gerepen spylce nan man ep ne gereah." Sume men cpebon tha hit cometa se steopra pæpe thone sume men hatath thone Fixebon steoppan 7 he æteopbe æper on thone æfen Letania major 8 K mai 7 swa sear ealle tha seofon niht."

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whose ancestry was obscure, whose power was young, whose title was questionable, and whose friends were but a party in the nation which he governed.

TOSTIG was a man of talents and activity, but his fraternal relation gave to his hostilities a peculiar venom. He had been expelled from Northumbria in a preceding reign, and he had not been recalled by Harold. His discontent and envy were fostered by William, who embraced the policy of multiplying the enemies and of dividing the strength of Harold.

EAGER to oppress his more fortunate brother, Tostig attempted, but in vain, to excite the king of Denmark to attack him. On the mind of Haralld Hardrada, king of Norway, he operated with more success. The Norwegian consented to invade England in the summer.³³

Tostig's
 invasion.

TOSTIG went to Flanders, to prepare the means of an aggression of his own. He visited William of Normandy, of whose ambition he was made a convenient instrument.³⁴ He collected all the English who were willing to join him; he raised many supplies from Flanders³⁵, and with sixty ships proceeded to the English coast.

HE levied contributions from the Isle of Wight, and plundered along the shore till he reached Sandwich. Harold was then at London.

³³ Snorre, vol. iii. p. 146—149. W. Gemmet. 285.

³⁴ Order. Vital. 492.

³⁵ Snorre, 150.

He collected a very numerous fleet and army, because he perceived that his brother's force was but the advanced guard of William. When Harold reached Sandwich, Tostig, whose friends were chiefly in the north, sailed hastily for Lincolnshire, and committed many ravages on Lindesey. The earls of Mercia and Northumbria allowed him no time to collect support, but commenced an immediate ³⁶ opposition. Tostig, defeated by their energy, fled to Scotland, with twelve ships ³⁷, to wait the arrival of his allies, and Malcolm gave him an asylum.

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the
Second.
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THE first arrow of calamity was thus happily averted from Harold; but the feeblest arm of the confederacy had thrown it, and the triumph did not much augment the security of the king. The two sovereigns, whose power singly was sufficient to endanger him, were now preparing a combined attack.

WILLIAM, the rival of Harold, was the son of Robert, the fifth duke of Normandy. He was not a legitimate child ³⁸; but in these days this

William
accedes
in Nor-
mandy.

³⁶ Malmsb. 94.; Hunt. 367. Matt. West. p. 433. says 40. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. mentions that Tostig came to Wight, *mið ƿƿa miclum līche ƿƿa he begitan mihte*. But in stating his entrance into the Humber, it adds, *mið ƿiſtīgum ƿeapum*.

³⁷ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. *mið 12 8naccum*.

³⁸ His mother was Herleva, or Harlotta, the daughter of Fullbert, an officer of the duke's household. After Robert's death she was married by Herluin, a *probus miles*, and left him two sons, of whom one, Odo, became an archbishop; the other also obtained reputation. W. Gemmet. lib. vii. c. 3.

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circumstance, though always a reproach³⁹, did not prevent deserving talents from attaining the royal succession. William, like our Athelstan and Edmund Ironside, was admitted to assume the dignity of his father.

WHEN Robert, obeying a fashion of his day, went to Jerusalem with a noble retinue, he appointed his boy William, though but a child, to govern Normandy in his stead, under the superintendence of a wise and faithful administration; and he engaged his nobles and the king of France to guard his arrangement.⁴⁰ Robert died at Nice, on his return from Palestine, in 1035, the same year in which Canute the Great departed from this scene of his existence.⁴¹

WILLIAM, at the age of eight, became the duke of Normandy.⁴² His minority tempted many nobles to rebel against him, and to be turbulent towards each other. The king of France also coveted his dominions. Normandy was for many years harassed by wars, murders, and civil feuds; and William, like Philip of Macedon, experienced adversity enough to excite his energies, and to discipline his judgment. The abilities of his

³⁹ Therefore one of his nobles declared, *quod nothus non deberet sibi aliisque Normannis imperare*. Gem. lib. vii. c. 3. Glaber Rodolphus says of the Normans: *Fuit enim usui a primo adventu ipsius gentis in Gallias, ex hujusmodi concubinarum commixtione illorum principes extitisse*, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Glaber, p. 47.

⁴¹ Gemmet. lib. vi. c. 12, 13. Ord. Vit. lib. iii. p. 459.

⁴² Ord. Vit. 459.

friends at first, and afterwards his own good conduct, surmounted every difficulty.⁴³ He not only secured his own power, but having so often measured it against others with success, he was taught to know its strength, to nurture ambition upon that knowledge, and to look around him for new theatres on which his active mind could be employed with profit, and where increased celebrity would reward its exertions.⁴⁴

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THE friendship of Edward, the visit of Harold, and the state of the English court, excited and determined him to aim at the sceptre of our island.

THE sudden coronation of Harold prevented the effect of any private intrigues, and left to William no hope but from his sword. William, however, knew that the combat was half gained if the moral impressions of society were in his favour, and he therefore sent an embassy to Harold, gently expostulating upon the seizure of the crown, reminding him of the sworn compact, and announcing hostilities if he persisted in the violation. After Harold's coronation, such messages could be only a theatrical trick, played off by the Norman, to call the attention

William's
message to
Harold.

⁴³ On William's struggles to maintain his dignity, see Guil. Pictav.; W. Gemmet.; and Orderic. Vitalis. They may be also read in Daniel's *Histoire de France*, vol. i. p. 362—368.

⁴⁴ He married Mathilda, the daughter of Baldwin, count of Flanders. Gemmet. p. 277. She was descended from Alfred's daughter.

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of the people to the moral circumstances of the case, to introduce the claims of William publicly to their notice, to encourage his partisans, and to assume the merit of peaceful discussion. William could never have supposed that upon a mere message Harold would have walked down humbly from the throne which he had been so hasty to ascend.

Harold's
answer.

HAROLD acted his part in the diplomatic farce, and gave a popular answer. His topics were as well selected as the case afforded. An oath extorted by violence could not be binding on the conscience. Human laws admitted a maiden's vow to be annulled, which was made without her parents' consent. As void must be the promise of an envoy, pledged without his master's knowledge. Besides, how could any individual alienate the right of royal succession without the national consent? And how could he abandon voluntarily a dignity with which the favour of the most potent nobles of England had honoured him? ⁴⁵

By wedding Alditha, the daughter of earl Algar ⁴⁶, instead of Adeliza, the daughter of William ⁴⁷, Harold strengthened himself at home, because Mercia and Northumbria were governed by the brothers of the lady.

WILLIAM held council with his chiefs on his

⁴⁵ Matt. Paris, p. 2. Matt. West. 434. Eadmer, 5.

⁴⁶ Gemmet, 285.

⁴⁷ She died at this crisis. Matt. Par. 2.

project of invasion. Some thought the chance unfavourable to Normandy, and dissuaded ⁴⁸ it. The influence of the duke surmounted opposition, and preparations were vigorously made. A great number of ships were immediately constructed. ⁴⁹ The tapestry, after the representation of a ship arriving from England, shows William on his throne, with the inscription, "Here duke William gave orders to build ships." Men cutting down trees with axes, and planing them into planks; others arranging and hammering these into vessels, are the next figures. Afterwards, five men appear pulling ships after them by ropes. Above are these words: "Here they drew the ships to the sea."

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MEN carrying coats of mail, spears, swords, and wine, and two others dragging a car, laden with weapons, and a barrel, are then exhibited. The inscription is: "These carry arms to the ships, and here they draw a car with wine and arms." Such was the expedition of the workmen, that they were ready by the end of August. ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Guil. Pictav. 197. and Ord. Vital. p. 493.

⁴⁹ Guil. Pictav. 197. W. Gemmet. 286. says, he had 3000 ships built; which seem too many either to be wanted by him or to be believed by us. Ord. Vital. says, that many ships were diligently made in Normandy with their utensils, and that both clergy and laity, by their money and liquors, assisted in the business, 496.

⁵⁰ The Roman de Rou thus describes these things:

"Fevres et charpentiers manda,
Dont veissiez à granz efforts

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WHILE the means of conveyance were providing, William was active in assembling soldiers sufficient for his attempt. His purpose was diffused through every land, and the courageous adventurer was invited from every coast to share in the honour, the danger, and the booty of the conflict. Crowds of fighters came from all parts adjacent.⁵¹ He collected powerful supplies from Bretagne, France, Flanders, and their ⁵²vicinity, which, joined with the soldiers whom he raised in his own Normandy, presented a mass of force not less formidable from their spirit of enterprize and their enthusiasm, than from their numbers and the military skill of William, who had been accustomed to warfare from his infancy. The emperor so far favoured the expedition as to promise to protect Normandy against any enemies

Par Normendie à touz les pors
Merriens à traire et fust porter,
Chevilles faire et bois doler
Nesf et esquiex appareillier,
Velles estendre et mats drecier
A grant entente et a grant ost,
Tout un este et un Aost
Mistrent au navie atorner."

Lancelot, 429.

⁵¹ Convenit etiam externus miles in auxilium copiosus. Guil. Pict. 197. Rumoribus quoque viri pugnaces de vicinis regionibus exciti convenerunt. Ord. Vit. 494.

⁵² Ingentem quoque exercitum ex Normannis et Flandrensibus ac Francis et Britonibus aggregavit. W. Gem. 286. Galli namque et Britones, Pictavini et Burgundiones aliique populi Cisalpini ad bellum transmarinum convolarunt. Ord. Vit. 494.

who might invade it in the duke's ⁵³absence. William was here also peculiarly fortunate. The king of France, though so much interested in preventing the duke of Normandy from acquiring the additional power of the English crown, yet did not interfere to prevent the collection and departure of the expedition. Perhaps he judged it to be a desperate effort, and waited to profit by its failure. William availed himself of the oaths which Harold had broken, to give to his cause the appearance of religious sanctity; he therefore consulted with the pope, who sent him a consecrated ⁵⁴banner.

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WHILE William was putting in action every means of offensive aggression, which talents like his, so exercised in warfare, could devise, the king of Norway was also summoning all the resources of his country to give prosperity to his ambitious hopes. It is a pleasing instance of the growing importance of England, that his notice to his subjects, of his intended expedition, did not meet with the unanimous concurrence of the Norwegian mountaineers. Though some, exulting in the recollection of their Haralld's achievements, thought disaster impossible; yet others intimated that England abounded with valiant chiefs and ⁵⁵soldiers. Like a part of the Norman nobility, they did not hesitate to foretell that the invasion would

King of
Norway
invades.

⁵³ Guil. Pict. 197. ⁵⁴ Guil. Pict. 197. Ord. Vit. 493.

⁵⁵ Snorre, Saga af Haralldi Hardrada, c. 82. p. 149.

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be a work of perilous difficulty, and doubtful issue.

THE time had been, when, to mention an expedition against England, was to collect speedily a numerous fleet of eager adventurers. But now that experience had made known the bravery of the natives, as the hour of attack drew near, ominous dreams began to flit through Norway. Snorre has detailed three of these, and mentions that many other portents occurred of dire and ill-boding import.⁵⁶ The dark minds of the North discovered their feelings by their superstitions. They began to dread the English power, and they found deterring omens, because they were disposed to look for them.

HARALLD Hardrada, having appointed his son Magnus to govern Norway in his absence, sailed with his other son, Olaf, and with his queen, Ellisif (Elizabeth) and her daughters, Maria and Ingegerdr, across the British ocean.⁵⁷ He reached Shetland; and, after a short delay, he sailed to the Orkneys. He left there his family, and directing his course along Scotland, he landed with his multitude of warriors at the Tyne.⁵⁸ His aggression seems to have been

⁵⁶ Snorre, 150—152.

⁵⁷ For Haralld's actions, see Snorre, in the ode translated in the second volume of Mallet's Northern Antiquities; in Ad. Brem. 41. 43.; and Steph. in Sax. 215.

⁵⁸ Snorre, 153. says, Klifland. So Orkneyinga Saga, p. 95. Hoveden, Florence, and Simeon, place his first descent at the Tyne.

unforeseen. The duke of Normandy absorbed the attention of Harold, who did not expect that his hour of difficulty would have been made more stormy by a competitor from the North. Hardrada found no opposition of importance on the English coasts. Tostig joined him.⁵⁹ They sailed onwards to Scarborough, which they plundered and burnt. They turned the point of Holderness, and with above five hundred ships entered the Humber.⁶⁰

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THEY proceeded up the Ouse as far towards York as Richale. The related earls, Edwine and Morcar, though taken unawares, prepared to oppose Haralld Hardrada with the same spirit which had before expelled Tostig. On the 20th of September they gave battle to the invaders near York, on the right side of the "Ouse. Hardrada formed his warriors into such an arrangement, that one of his wings reached to the river, and the other was flanked by a ditch and marsh full of water. The banner of the king and the flower of his warriors were on the river. His line at the ditch was weak, and tempted the attack of the earls, the brothers-in-law of Harold. They drove the enemy from

⁵⁹ Flor. 429.

⁶⁰ Snorre, 154. Hoveden, 448. Flor. 429. Our writers differ on the number of Haralld's ships. Matt. Paris says 1000. So Sigeb. Gemb. p. 600. Ingulf states 200; and Malmsbury and others have 300.

⁶¹ Hunt. 367. says: "Cujus locus pugnae in Australi parte urbis adhuc ostenditur."

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their position. It was then that Hardrada rushed into the battle, and, with his compact troops, pierced through and divided the pursuing English. Some were driven to the river; some to the marsh and ditch. The slaughter was so great, that the Norwegians traversed the marsh on the bodies of the fallen.⁶² The Saxon account confirms the Icelandic: it claims the first advantage for the English, and acknowledges that in the disastrous close, more were pushed into the waters than were slain by the ⁶³sword. The earls were besieged in York.⁶⁴

HAROLD, watching anxiously the motions of the duke of Normandy, had stationed his troops on his southern coasts. The success of Haralld Hardrada compelled him to abandon this position of defence, and to march with his army into the North. To repel the king of Norway immediately was essential to his safety, and with this purpose he proceeded towards him so rapidly, as to reach York four days after the defeat of the earls.

HARDRADA had been as much reinforced by the friends of Tostig⁶⁵, and by those adventurers who always join the flag of victory, as

⁶² Snorre, 155. Orkneyinga Saga, p. 95. The Northerns give the command of the Saxons to Walthiof and Morcar. Walthiof is not mentioned by the English chroniclers in Harold's reign; but in William's reign he occurs with the Northumbrians, as in Hoveden, p. 455.

⁶³ Hoveden, 448. Flor. 429.

⁶⁴ Malmsb. 94.

⁶⁵ Snorre, 156.

the time would permit; but the sudden presence of the king of England was an incident which he did not anticipate.

HE had committed his ships to the care of his son, Olaf, with a part of his forces, and had marched with the rest towards the city, to settle the government of the province. The day was beautiful and mild. The sun shone with those pleasing beams which exhilarate the spirits, and give new charms to irradiated nature. But, alas! the drama of ambition was acting in the country, and its melancholy catastrophe was about to scatter round the dismal spectacle of death. Man was hastening to deform the smiling scene with all the massacres of a ferocious battle. On a sudden, the king of Norway saw an army marching towards him. He enquired of Tostig who they were. Tostig stated his hope that they were a supply of his friends, but he knew enough of his brother's activity also to add, that they might be the English forces.

THE advancing troops were soon discerned to be hostile; and Tostig, wishing a more elaborate preparation, advised a retreat to the ships, that the strength of Norway might join the battle in its most concentrated vigour. The king of Norway was hero enough not to decline an offered combat; but he sent three swift couriers to command the immediate presence of his other warriors.

HE drew out his men in a long but not dense

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line, and, bending back the wings, he formed them into a circle every where of the same depth, with shield touching shield. In the centre the royal banner was planted, not unaptly surnamed the Ravager of the Earth. The peculiar mode in which the cavalry attacked, was the cause of this arrangement. Their custom was to charge promiscuously in an impetuous mass, to fly off, and to return in the same or at some other point. Haralld Hardrada was as yet weak in cavalry. It was now but the 25th September, and he had not had time to mount many of his troops. The king of England, on the contrary, came forth with the strength of the island, and of course a large part of his army must have been horse. To secure himself against this superiority, was the first care of the Norwegian.

THE first line were ordered to fix their lances obliquely in the ground, with the points inclining towards the enemy, that the cavalry might impale themselves when they charged. The second line held also their spears ready to plunge into the breasts of the horses when near. The archers were joined with the array of Haralld and Tostig, to contribute their efforts to the success of the day.⁶⁶

HARDRADA rode round his circle to inspect its order. His horse stumbling, he was thrown

⁶⁶ Snorre, 159.

to the ground, but he sprang up, and wisely ex-claimed, that it was an omen of good. Harold, who observed the incident, thought otherwise. He enquired who that Norwegian was, clothed in a blue tunic and with a splendid helmet, who had fallen. He was answered, the king of Norway. "He is a large and majestic person," replied Harold, "but his fortune will be disastrous."⁶⁷

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AN offer was sent to Tostig, before the battle joined, to give him Northumbria, and other honours, if he would withdraw from the impending conflict. Tostig remarked that such a proposition in the preceding winter would have saved many lives: "But," added he, "if I should accept these terms, what is to be the compensation of the king, my ally?" "Seven feet of ground, or, as he is a very tall man, perhaps a little more," was the answer. This intimation closed the negotiation, for Tostig was faithful to his friend.⁶⁸

THE Norwegians, not having expected a battle on that day, are said to have been without their coats of mail. The king of Norway sung some stanzas on the circumstance, and awaited the attack. His orders were implicitly obeyed. The charges of the English cavalry were received on the implanted points, and while the Norwegians kept their circle unbroken, they repulsed every

⁶⁷ Snorre, 160.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

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attack. Weary of their unprevailing efforts, the English began to relax in some confusion, and their adversaries were tempted to pursue. It was then that the fortune of Norway first drooped. The English returned to the charge. The Norwegians were out of their defensive arrangement, and felt the destructive fury of the English weapons. Hardrada encouraged his men by the most heroic exertions; but he could not bind victory to his standard. A fatal dart pierced his throat; and his fall gave the first triumph to his kingly competitor.⁶⁹

TOSTIG assumed the command, and the battle still raged. Harold again offered life and peace to his brother, and the Norwegians, but the enraged Tostig was deaf to reconciliation. Victory or death was his decision; and the arrival of the division from the ships, under the command of Eysteinn Orri, gave new hopes to his fury.

THESE fresh troops were completely armed. Their attack was so vehement, that the fortune of the day was nearly changed; but they were exhausted by the speed with which they had hurried to the place of conflict. Their exertions relaxed as their strength ebbed; and after a desperate struggle, Tostig and the flower of

⁶⁹ Snorre, 163. See Haralld's character in Snorre, 174. He was fifty years of age when he died. Ib. 175.

Norway perished.⁷⁰ Harold, who had shown himself the ardent warrior through all the combat, permitted Olave, the son of the unfortunate Hardrada, and Paul, the earl of the⁷¹ Orkneys, to retire from the island with their surviving friends and a few ships.⁷² Olave went to the Orkneys, and in the following spring to Norway, where he reigned jointly with his brother Magnus.⁷³

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Two of Harold's competitors had now fallen; and if an interval had elapsed before the assault of the other, of sufficient space to have permitted him to have supplied the consumption of the late battles, and to have organized a new force, it is probable that the duke of Normandy

⁷⁰ Snorre, 165. Huntingdon says, there never was a severer battle, p. 368. He, Malmsbury, and others, state, that at one period of the conflict, a Norwegian defended the bridge against the English army, and killed with his battle-axe forty soldiers before he was destroyed. Ord. Vit. mentions, that a great heap of bones in his time marked on the spot the dreadful slaughter of the day, 500.

⁷¹ Hoveden, 448. Ingulf, 69. On Paul's descent and family, see the Orkneyinga Saga, p. 91—93.

⁷² Ingulf, Hoveden, and others, say with 20. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. has 24. This mentions Olaf's departure thus: "Se Kȳnȳ tha ȝear ȝrȳthe Olafe thær Nopna cȳnȳer ȳuna ȳ heope bpe' ȳ than eople of Opcan eȳe ȳ eallon than theon thā ȳcȳpū to lafe ȳæpon ȳ hi ȳopon tha upp to upan Kȳnȳnȳe ȳ ȳȳopon athas th hi æppe ȳolȳon ȳrȳth ȳ ȳrȳeontȳcȳpe into thȳran lanȳe halȳan ȳ ȳe cȳnȳ hi let ham ȳapan mȳb 24 ȳcȳpum. Thaȳ tȳa ȳolc ȳeȳeoht ȳæpon ȳeȳremmeȳe bȳnnan ȳȳ nȳhtan."

⁷³ Orkneyinga Saga, 95. Snorre, 171—176.

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would have shared the fate of the king of Norway. But three days only intervened between the defeat of the Norwegians, and the landing of William. He arrived at Pevensey on the 28th of September⁷⁴, and the king of Norway had fallen on the 25th.

HAROLD, expecting an invasion from William, had in the spring assembled, on the southern coasts, the best bulwark of the island. He stationed his fleet off Wight, to encounter the Norman on the seas, and encamped an army in its vicinity. This guard was continued during the summer and autumn, and while it watched at its allotted post, the throne of Harold was secure. But on the 8th of September⁷⁵, the fleet, which had lain along the coast at Pevensey, Hastings, and the neighbouring ports, was, from the want of provisions, obliged to⁷⁶ disperse. Harold, being immediately after occupied by the Norwegian invasion, neglected to supply and reinstate it. By this unhappy mistake, he removed the main obstacle to William's expedition.

WILLIAM had completed his armament in August, and it lay in the mouth of the Dive,

⁷⁴ The printed Chronicle says on Michaelmas day. But the MS. Tib. B. 4. says, "On ꝛce' Michaelꝛ mæꝛꝛe æfen." So the Lambard MS. Ord. Vit. 500, agrees with the MS.

⁷⁵ Hoveden and Florence mark the nativity of St. Mary as the day. This was 8th September.

⁷⁶ The MS. Chron. B. 1. has a long paragraph on this.

a little river between Havre and Caen. Fortunately for his enterprise, the wind was adverse. If it had been favourable, he would have sailed, and the fleet of Harold would have received the first shock of the storm. If the English navy had been defeated, an army was lining its coasts, which would have disputed his landing. Should victory still have followed him, his force must have been diminished by the combats, and he would have had then to wrestle with the strength of the island, directed by the active talents of Harold. But the contrary winds detained him for a month at the ⁷⁷Dive; and in this interval the English fleet left its position, and the invasion of Norway called Harold from the southern coasts.

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AT last the currents of the atmosphere came into the direction he desired, and the fleet sailed from the Dive, round Havre, to St. Vallery, near Dieppe, which was the nearest port between Normandy and England. Some unfavourable events had occurred. Of the large fleet several vessels were wrecked; and many of the adventurers, whose courage lessened from their leisure of reflection on the perils of the expedition, abandoned his standard. William caused the bodies of the drowned to be buried with speed and privacy; he exhilarated the spirits of his army by abundance of provisions, and he ani-

⁷⁷ Ord. Vital. 500. Guil. Pict. 198.

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mated their drooping hopes by his eloquent exhortations. To excite their enthusiasm, he caused St. Vallery's body to be carried in procession, under the pretence of imploring, and perhaps with the hope of obtaining a propitious navigation.

A GENERAL eagerness to embark now pervaded the expedition. The duke, more impatient than any, was every where urging his soldiers to hasten to their ships. To prevent disasters usual to an unknown coast, he enjoined all the vessels to anchor round his at night, and not to recommence their voyage till, the lighted beacon on the top of his mast having given the signal, the general clangor of the trumpets should announce the time of resailing.⁷⁸

WITH seven hundred ships⁷⁹, or more, replete

⁷⁸ These particulars are from the contemporary William of Poitou, whose valuable fragment was printed by Du Chesne, from a MS. in our Cotton Library.

⁷⁹ It has been already remarked, that W. Gemmet. gives to William 3000 ships. The very ancient author of the Roman de Rou says, he had read of 3000 ships, but that he had heard it declared to his father that there were 700 all but four.

“ Ne vous voil mie mettre en leitre,
Ne je ne me voil entremeitre
Quels barons et quels chevaliers,
Granz vavasours, granz soudoiers
Ont li Dus en sa compaignie
Quant il prist toute sa navie.
Mez ceu oi dire a mon pere,
Bien m'en souvient, mes vallet ere,

with horses⁸⁰, and every implement of battle, he quitted his native shores. During the day, his ardent spirit not only led the van of his fleet, but his ship so far outsailed the others, that when a mariner was ordered to look round from the top of the mast, he declared he saw nothing but the clouds and the ocean. William, though impatient for his landing, yet with dignified composure, ordered his men to cast anchor, and calmly took a cheerful refreshment. A second sailor ascended, and beheld four ships coming into the horizon. Another, at a farther interval, declared he saw a sailing forest. The duke's heart swelled with joy, and he anticipated all the triumphs of his daring adventure.⁸¹

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Quer sept cent nef quatre mains furent,
Quant de St. Valery s'esmurent,
Que nef, que batteaux, que esquiez
A porter armes et hernoiz.
Ai je en escript trouvé,
Ne sai dire s'est verité,
Que il y eut trois mile nef,
Qui portèrent velles et tresf."

Lancelot, 431.

La Chronique de Normondie intimates, that seme escriptures temoingnent neuf cens et sept grandes nef a granz tresf et voiles, sans li menu vaisselin. Ib. M. Lancelot remarks, that the menu vaisselin may supply somewhat of the great difference between the rumours. The expressions of Guil. Pictav. imply 1000 ships.

⁸⁰ The tapestry of Bayeux has several ships with horses.

⁸¹ Guil. Pict. 199. To this repast of William, M. Lancelot refers that in the tapestry. I think his supposition is decidedly and obviously erroneous.

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AT Pevensey their voyage ceased on the 28th September. They landed peaceably, for no opposing force was near.⁸² They made no stay here, and proceeded immediately to Hastings, to procure food.⁸³ As William landed from his ship, it happened that he fell. In these days, when the mind in its most infant state was full of the groundless fantasies of childhood, the accident was interpreted into an omen of disaster; but the spreading panic was checked by the judicious soldier who raised William from the ground. Seeing his hands full of mud, he exclaimed, "Fortunate General! you have already taken England. See, its earth is in your hands."⁸⁴ How excitable must be the mind of

⁸² Guil. Pict. 199. The tapestry shows this. After representing many ships in full sail, some with armed men, and some with horses, with the inscription: "*Mare transivit et venit ad Pevenesæ,*" it shows the landing of horses unmolested.

⁸³ The tapestry details this curiously. Four armed horsemen are riding. The words over them are, "And here the soldiers hastened to Hastings to seize provisions." One man is leading a sheep; another is standing near with an axe, looking at an ox; another is carrying some bundle on his shoulders near a man with a pig. The cookery, the serving, and the enjoyment of the repast, are then successively represented with appropriate inscriptions. The little anonymous narration, written in the reign of Henry I., and published by Taylor from a MS. at Oxford, after landing them at Pevensey, adds, "*Sed non diutius ibi moratus, cum omni exercitu suo venit ad alium portum non longe ab isto situm quam vocant Hastings ibique omnem suam militiam requiescere jussit,*" p. 190.

⁸⁴ Matt. West. 435. and others.

man, when a casual stumble can intimidate thousands, and a lucky expression re-assure them! How difficult must it be to lead such excitability into a steady course of wisdom and virtue!

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THE duke forbad plunder, and built military works both at Pevensey and Hastings, to protect his shipping.⁸⁵ It is mentioned that he went out with twenty-five companions, to explore the country. They fell into such a rugged course, that they were obliged to return on foot; and the army remarked, with high approbation, that William had burthened himself with the armour of one of his party, who was unable to get to the camp without putting it off.⁸⁶ William was now involved in an expedition which required the most zealous and self-devoting support of all his soldiers. Few things interest more strongly than the useful condescensions of the great, and it is an argument of William's discernment and true dignity of mind, that he seized such little occasions of exciting, in his army, an affectionate attachment.

A Norman friend conveyed to William the tidings of Harold's victory over Norway. The counsel of alarm was added to the news. "He is coming against you with all his power, and I think you will but be as despised dogs against it.

⁸⁵ Wil. Gemmet. 286. Ord. Vit. 500. The tapestry represents this construction of the castle at Hastings.

⁸⁶ Guil. Pict. 199.

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You have prudently governed all your affairs in Normandy; be not now rash; keep to your fortifications; meet him not in battle."

WILLIAM'S mind was above these little agitations of fear. He had thrown his die. His spirit was fixed to stand the full venture, and to endure all the consequences, whether fatal or propitious. He returned for answer, that he should not entrench himself, but should give the battle as early as he could join it. He declared that this would have been his resolution, if he had headed only 10,000 men, instead of the 60,000 who were assembled round his banners.⁸⁷

HAROLD received the information of William's landing, while he was dining at York.⁸⁸ The impressive incident would have summoned a wary mind to the most deliberate circumspection. A new enemy coming in such power, demanded the wisest exertions of military intelligence. But the mind of Harold possessed not the judgment of his great adversary. His bravery had more vivacity than discretion, and its natural ardour was stimulated into presumption by his victory against the king of Norway. He looked upon William as his devoted prey; and instead of collecting all his means of defence, and multiplying these by the wisdom of their application, he flew to London, as if he had only to combat in order to conquer.

⁸⁷ Guil. Pict. 199.

⁸⁸ Hunt. 368.

THIS triumphant vanity was the instrument as well as the signal of his ruin. In the deadly contest against Hardrada, he had lost many of his bravest warriors. By an ill-timed covetousness, he disgusted the surviving; for he monopolised the plunder. When he marched to London against William, a large part of his army deserted him. Those only who served on pay, and as mercenaries, kept to him.⁸⁹

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HE sent spies to inspect William's force. The judicious duke, who knew his strength, and the good appointment of his army, had nothing to conceal. He caused the spies to be well feasted, and to be led through his encampment. On their return to Harold, they magnified what they had beheld; but added, that from their shaven faces, they should have taken the Normans for an army of divines. Harold laughed at the conceit, but had sense enough to remark, that the divines would prove very formidable soldiers.⁹⁰

IT was the interest of Harold to delay a battle with the invaders, but it was his passion to hasten it. His brother Gurth reminded him, that he had not recruited his losses in the north. Such an observation was evidence of his judg-

⁸⁹ Malmsb. 94. Matt. West. 434.

⁹⁰ Malmsb. 100. The English did not shave the upper lip. Ib. The Roman de Rou mentions the account of the spies. Lanc. p. 456.

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ment. His other remarks, that if Harold fought, it would be committing perjury, and therefore that he, Gurth, had better lead on the English in his stead, were deservedly despised by Harold.²¹ The perjury, if any, was in the resistance, and could not be diminished by the change of the commander. But with what energy could the troops be expected to fight in a quarrel of personal competition, if Harold was away? His absence, on such grounds, would have sanctified the claim of William, and might have tainted his own fame with the perilous imputation of cowardice.

MONASTIC messengers were reciprocally sent by the two rivals. The one from the duke is said to have offered Harold his option of three proposals. To quit the throne, to reign under William, or to decide the dispute by a single combat.

THE two first propositions Harold was too courageous to regard. The last was more compatible with his humour. But Harold had been William's guest, and well knew his personal prowess. The Norman excelled most men of his day, in strength, stature, agility, and skill. As he possessed such notorious superiority, there was little courage in his offer of the duel, and Harold could not be disgraced in refusing it. Harold therefore answered, with unusual

²¹ Malmsb. 100.

discretion, when he declared, that God should judge between them.⁹²

HAROLD staid but six days at London to collect troops for the collision with the invaders⁹³; his impatient presumption could not tarry for the force that was wanted to secure success. He left the city, and marched all night towards Hastings.⁹⁴ His hope was, to surprise the army of the duke⁹⁵, as he had surprised the Norwegians; and so confident were his expectations, that he sent round a fleet of 700 vessels to hinder William's escape.⁹⁶

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THIS was another measure of his ill-judgment. A very large part of his force must have been lost to him in manning these vessels; and yet, though he had not had time to collect an army of great power, he deprived himself, needlessly, of a numerous support, by sending it on the seas. Prudence would have counselled him to have opened a passage on the ocean for his enemies' retreat. If he had coolly reasoned, he must have seen that William placed the issue of his adventure upon a land battle. To wage this successfully, he concentrated all his strength.

⁹² Malmsb. 100. Guil. Pict. 200. Matt. Paris, 3.

⁹³ Will. Gemmet. 287.

⁹⁴ Gemmet. 287.

⁹⁵ Ord. Vit. 500. Guil. Pict. 201.

⁹⁶ Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 500. L'Ancienne Chronique de Normandie, and the Roman de Rou (Lanc. 444—446.) mention that William burnt and destroyed his own shipping, to make his army more desperate.

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Harold, instead of meeting him with his most consolidated force, favoured the wishes of his enemies by manning a fleet, whose exertions could not have the least influence on the impending conflict. But when vanity assumes the helm of our conduct, discretion disappears.

IN projecting to surprise William, he proved how little he understood of the duke's character. Alert in obtaining notice of Harold's approach, William immediately commanded his men to remain all night under arms.⁹⁷ Deterred by this preparation, Harold ventured no night attack.

ON the spot afterwards called Battle, the English rested on an adjacent hill. The Normans quitted Hastings⁹⁸, and occupied an eminence opposite.⁹⁹ The night before the battle was spent by the English in festivity; by the Normans in devotion.¹⁰⁰

WHILE William was putting on his armour, it happened that he inverted his coat of mail. This petty mistake was a fatal omen; but William, like all great souls, disdaining such puerilities, said, with a calm countenance, "If I believed in omens, I should not fight to-day, but I never credited such tales, and never loved

⁹⁷ Gemm. 287.

⁹⁸ The tapestry represents them as departing from Hastings to the place of battle.

⁹⁹ Taylor's Anon. 192.

¹⁰⁰ Malmsb. 101.

the superstitious. In every concern which I ought to undertake, I commit myself, for the result, to my Creator's ordination."¹⁰¹

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At the command of their leader, the Normans, who were in the camp, armed. William, with solemn devotion, heard mass, and received the sacrament. He hung round his neck the relics on which Harold had sworn, and proceeded to arrange his troops¹⁰²; his standard was entrusted to Toustain the Fair.¹⁰³

He divided his army into three bodies. In front he placed his light infantry, armed with arrows and balistæ. Behind these were the heavy armed foot. His last division was composed of his cavalry, among whom he stationed himself.¹⁰⁴

He strengthened their determined valour by an impressive harangue.¹⁰⁵ He reminded them of the achievements of Hastings, whose actions

¹⁰¹ "Si ego in sortem crederem, hodie amplius in bellum non introirem, sed ego nunquam sortibus credidi neque sortilegos amavi. In omni negotio quodcunque agere debui, Creatori meo semper me commendavi." Taylor's Anon. p. 192. Guil. Pict. 201. mentions it.

¹⁰² Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 500.

¹⁰³ Le Roman de Rou mentions, that William first offered this honour to Raoul de Conches, and Gautier Guiffart, who declined it. See it quoted, Lanc. 450—453.

¹⁰⁴ Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 501.

¹⁰⁵ The tapestry represents William speaking to his soldiers. The inscription imports: "Here William exhorts his soldiers to prepare themselves manfully and wisely to battle against the English army."

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these pages have commemorated. He bade them to recollect Rollo, the founder of their nation, and the uniform successes of their ancestors against the Franks. He noticed their most recent exploits.¹⁰⁶ He assured them that they were to fight not merely for victory, but for life. If they exerted themselves like men, glory and wealth were their rewards; if they were defeated, a cruel death, a hopeless captivity, and everlasting infamy, were the inevitable consequences. Escape, there was none. On one side, an unknown and hostile country; on the other, the blockaded sea precluded flight.¹⁰⁷ He added, "Let any of the English come forward, of those whom our ancestors have an hundred times defeated, and demonstrate that the people of Rollo have ever been unfortunate in war, and I will abandon my enterprise. Is it not then a disgrace, that a nation accustomed to be conquered, a nation so broken by war, a nation not even having arrows, should pitch themselves in regular battle against you? Is it not a disgrace, that the perjured Harold should dare to face me in your presence? I am astonished that you should have beheld those who destroyed your fathers, and my kinsman Alfred, by the basest treachery, and that they should yet be in existence. Raise, soldiers, your standards. Let neither diffidence

¹⁰⁶ Hen. Hunt. 368. Bromton.¹⁰⁷ Guil. Pict. 201.

nor moderation check your anger. Let the lightning of your glory shine resplendent from the east to the west. Let the thunders of your impetuous onset be heard afar, ye generous avengers of the murdered!"¹⁰⁸

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WHILE he was yet speaking, his men hastened to engage. Their ardour could not tarry for his conclusion. One Taillefer, singing the song of Roland and Charlemagne¹⁰⁹, even outstripped his friends, and killed an English ensign bearer. Another also became his victim. A third overpowered him, and then the armies¹¹⁰ joined. The cry of the Normans was, "God help us." The English exclaimed, "The holy cross; the cross of God."¹¹¹

THE English, chiefly infantry, were arranged by Harold into an impenetrable wedge. Their

¹⁰⁸ Hen. Hunt. 368.

¹⁰⁹ " Taillefer qui mout bien chantout,
Sur un cheval qui tost alout,
Devant euls aloit chantant,
De Kallemaigne et de Roullant,
Et d'Olivier et de Vassaux
Qui moururent en Rains chevaux."

Roman de Rou, p. 461.

Malmsbury and others mention, that the Normans sung the song of Roland.

¹¹⁰ Hen. Hunt. 368. Rad. Dict. 480. Bromton, 960.

¹¹¹ The Roman de Rou, p. 461. which says :

" Alierot est en Engleiz
Qui Sainte Croix est en Franceiz
Et Goderode est autrement
Comme en François Dex tout pussant."

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shields covered their bodies. Their arms wielded the battle-axe. Harold, whose courage was equal to his dignity, quitted his horse to share the danger and the glory on foot. His brothers accompanied him; and his banner, in which the figure of a man in combat, woven sumptuously with gold and jewels, shone conspicuous to his troops, was implanted near him.¹¹²

WILLIAM, whose eye was searching every part of the field, enquired of a warrior near him, where he thought Harold stood. "In that dense mass on the top of the hill, for there his standard seems displayed," was the answer. William expressed his surprise at his presence in the conflict, and his confidence that his breach of faith would on that day be punished.¹¹³

THE English had possessed themselves of the hilly ground, which was flanked by a wood. The cavalry dismounted, and added to the firm mass of Harold's array. The Norman foot, advancing, discharged their missile weapons with effect; but the English, with patient valour, kept their ground. They returned the attack with spears and lances; with their terrible battle-axes, their ancient weapons, and with stones, whose falling masses were directed to overwhelm. The battle glowed. Distant weapons were abandoned for a closer conflict. The clamour of the engaging soldiers was

¹¹² Malmsb. 101.¹¹³ Taylor's Anon. Hist. 192.

drowned in the clashing of their weapons, and the groans of the dying."¹¹⁴ Valour abounded on both sides, and the chieftains fought with all the desperate firmness of personal enmity and ardent ambition.

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BEFRIENDED by the elevation of their ground, by the mass of their phalanx, and by their Saxon axes, which cut through all the armour of their adversaries, the undaunted English not merely sustained, but repelled every attack. Intimidated by such invincible fortitude, the foot and cavalry of Bretagne, and all the other allies of William in the left wing, gave way. The impression extended along all his line. It was increased by a rumour, that the duke had fallen. Dismay began to unnerve his army; a general flight seemed about to ensue."¹¹⁵

WILLIAM, observing the critical moment which threatened destruction to his glory, rushed among the fugitives, striking or menacing them with his spear. His helmet was thrown from his head. The indignant countenance of their leader was visible: "Behold me—I live; and I will conquer yet, with God's assistance. What madness induces you to fly? What way can be found for your escape? They whom, if you choose, you may kill like cattle, are driving and destroying you.—You fly from victory—from deathless honour.—You run upon ruin

¹¹⁴ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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and everlasting disgrace. If you retreat, not one of you but will perish.”¹¹⁶

At these words they rallied—he led them to another onset. His sword strewed his path with slaughter. Their valour and their hopes revived. Their charge upon their pursuers was destruction; they rushed impetuously on the rest.

BUT the main body of the English continued unmoved and impenetrable. All the fury of the Normans and their allies could force no opening. An unbroken wall of courageous soldiery was every where present.

DEPRESSED by this resistance, William’s mind was roused to attempt a stratagem. He had seen the success with which his rallied troops had turned upon those who pursued them. He resolved to hazard a feigned retreat, to seduce the English into the disorder of a confident pursuit, and to profit by their diffusion.¹¹⁷

A BODY of a thousand horse, under the count of Boulogne, were entrusted with the execution of this manœuvre. With a horrible outcry they rushed upon the English; then suddenly checking themselves, as if intimidated, they affected a hasty flight.¹¹⁸ The English were cheated. They threw themselves eagerly on the retreating Normans, and at first they prospered; for the Normans retired upon a great ditch, or excavation, somewhat con-

¹¹⁶ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Taylor’s Anon. Hist. 193. 1 Dugd. 311.

cealed by its vegetation. Driven upon this, great numbers perished, and some of the English were dragged into the ruin.¹¹⁹ But while this incident was occupying their attention, the duke's main body rushed between the pursuers, and the rest of their army. The English endeavoured to regain their position; the cavalry turned upon them, and, thus enclosed, they fell victims to the skilful movement of their opponents.¹²⁰ Twice was the

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¹¹⁹ Hunt. 368. Rad. Dict. 480. Bromton, 960. This ditch was afterwards called Malfossed. 1 Dugd. 311. The Roman de Rou states this:

• “ En la champagne out un fossé
Normans l'avient eux adossé
Embelinant l'orent passé
Ne l'avoient mie esgardé.
Engleis on tant Normans hastez
Et tant empoins et tant boutez
Ez fossez les ont fait ruser,
Chevaux et hommes gambeter
Mout voissiez hommes tomber,
Les uns sur les autres verser
Et tresbuschier et adenter
Ne s'en pooient relever;
Des Engleis y mourut assez
Que Normans ont a euls tirez.” Lanc. 464.

The tapestry seems to represent this. After the fall of Harold's brothers, it has the inscription: “ Here the English and Franks fell together in battle.” The figures are warriors fighting, and horses in positions which imply violent falls.

¹²⁰ Hunt. 368. Bromt. 960. At one period of the conflict, probably in this, Odo, the half-brother of William, and bishop of Bayeux, rendered him great services by rallying his men. The tapestry, immediately after the preceding incident, shows him on horseback in armour, with a kind of

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Norman artifice repeated, and twice had the English to mourn their credulous pursuit.¹²¹ In the heat of the struggle, twenty Normans pledged themselves to each other to attack, in conjunction, the great standard of Harold. Eying the expected prize, they rushed impetuously towards it. In attempting to penetrate through the hostile battalions, many of the party fell; but their object not having been foreseen, the survivors secured it.¹²²

THE battle continued with many changes of fortune. The rival commanders distinguished themselves for their personal exertions. Harold emulated the merit, and equalled the achievements of the bravest soldier, at the same time that he discharged the vigilant duty of the general.¹²³ William was constantly the example

club, amid other cavalry. The words over are, "Here Odo, bishop, holding a stick, encourages the youths." The Roman de Rou also mentions his great and useful activity:

" Sor un cheval tout blanc seoit,
Toute la gent le congnoissoit,
Un baston tenoit en son poing.
Là où veoit le grand besoing
Fasoit les chevaliers torner,
Et la bataille arrester.
Souvent les faisoit assaillir,
Et souvent les fesoit ferir.
Des que le point du jour entra,
Que la bataille commencha
Dessi que nonne trespassa,
Eu chi de cha, fu si de la."

Lanc. 466.

¹²¹ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹²² Hunt. 368. Bromt. 960.

¹²³ Malmsh. 101.

to his troops. He had three horses killed under him¹²⁴; but, undaunted by peril, he was every where the foremost. Such was the general enthusiasm, that they who were exhausted by loss of blood and strength, still fought on, leaning on their supporting shields. The more disabled, by their voice and gestures, strove to animate their friends.¹²⁵

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THE sun was departing from the western horizon, and the victory was still undecided. While Harold lived and fought, his valorous countrymen were invincible.¹²⁶ But an order of the duke's, by occasioning his fate, gained the splendid laurel. To harass the hinder ranks of that firm mass which he could not by his front attack destroy, he directed his archers not to shoot horizontally at the English, but to discharge their arrows vigorously upwards into the sky. These fell with fatal effect on the more distant troops.¹²⁷ The random shafts descended like impetuous hail, and one of them pierced the gallant Harold in the eye.¹²⁸ A

¹²⁴ Malmsb. 101. Guil. Pict. 203. Matt. West. 438.

¹²⁵ Guil. Pict. 203.

¹²⁶ Malmsb. 101. Matt. West. 437.

¹²⁷ Hunt. 368.

¹²⁸ Hunt. 368. Malmsb. 101. The Roman de Rou states the incident thus:

“ Heralt à l'estendart estoit,
A son poer se deffendoit.
Mez mout estoit de l'œil grevez
Pour ceu qu'il li estoit crevez,

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furious charge of the Norman horse increased the disorder, which the king's wound must have occasioned; his pain disabled him, and he was mortally wounded. As the evening closed, one of the combatants had the brutality to strike into his thigh after he was dead, for which William, with nobler feelings, disgraced him on the field.¹²⁹ Panic scattered the English on their leader's death.¹³⁰ The Normans vigorously pursued, though the broken ground and frequent ditches checked their ardour. Encouraged by observing this, a part of the fugitives rallied, and, indignant at the prospect of surrendering

A la douleur que il sentoit
Du cop de l'œil qui li doloit,
Vint un armé par la bataille,
Heralt feri sor la ventaille
A terre le fist tresbuchier;
A ceu qu'il se vout condrecier,
Un chevalier le rabati,
Qui en la cuisse le feri,
En la cuisse parmi le gros
La plaie fu disi qu'a l'os."

Lanc. 467.

¹²⁹ Matt. West. 438. Malmsb. 101. The tapestry seems to represent this; for under the words, "Here Harold king was slain," an armed man is figured falling dead, his battle-axe flying from him. Another upon horseback leans forward, and with a sword is wounding his thigh.

¹³⁰ The tapestry ends with the flight of the English. "On ne voit plus ce qui reste de la tapisserie que des traits qui tracent des figures; peutetre n'y a t'il jamais eu que ces traits; l'ouvrage dessiné et tracé fut interrompu par la mort de la princesse Mathilde; peut etre aussi le tems et les differens accidens qu'a essayez cette extremité de la tapisserie, ont rougé le tissu." Lanc. 468.

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their country to foreigners, they fought to renew the combat. William ordered the count Eustace and his soldiers to the attack. The count exposed the peril, and advised a retreat. He was at this instant vehemently struck in his neck, and his face was covered with his blood. The duke, undismayed, led on his men to the conflict. Some of his noblest Normans fell, but he completed his hard-earned victory.¹³¹

THE body of Harold was found near his two brothers, and was carried to the Norman camp. His mother offered its weight of gold, for the privilege of burying it; but she was denied the melancholy satisfaction.¹³² The two brothers of Harold fell also in the battle.¹³³

WILLIAM escaped unhurt.¹³⁴ But the slaughter of his Normans had been great.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Guil. Pict. 203.

¹³² So says Guil. Pict. 204. "In castra Ducis delatus, qui tumultandum eum Guillelmo agnomine Maletto concessit, non matri pro corpore dilectæ prolis auri par pondus offerenti — Æstimavit indignum fore ad matris libitum sepeliri cujus ob nimiam cupiditatem insepulti remanerent innumerabilēs." So, in his following apostrophe, he says: "In cruore jacuisti et in littoreo tumulo jaces." In opposition to this contemporary evidence, the English writers, as Malmsb. 102. and others, say: "Corpus Haroldi matri repetenti sine pretio misit licet illa multum per legatos obtulisset." It is added, that the body was buried at Waltham. Orderic's statement, p. 502., is like Guil. Pict.

¹³³ The tapestry places the death of Gurth and Leofwine, the two brothers, some time before Harold's.

¹³⁴ Matt. West. 439.

¹³⁵ Hoveden, 449. Sim. Dun. 197.

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His victory was splendid ; but if Harold had not fallen, it would have contributed very little to gain the crown of England. It was the death of Harold which gave William the sceptre. The force of England was unconquered. A small portion of it only had been ¹³⁶ exerted ; and if Harold had survived, or any other heir at all competent to the crisis, William would have earned no more from his victory than the privilege of fighting another battle with diminished strength. When he landed on England, he came with all his power. The fleet of the Anglo-Saxons was afterwards ready to cut off further succour, if such could have been raised for him in Normandy ; and it is probable, that if by the fall of Harold, England had not been suddenly left without a chief, the battle of Hastings would have been to William but a scene of brilliant glory, speedily followed by a melancholy catastrophe.

IN great revolutions much is effected by active talents ; but perhaps more by that arrangement of events over which man has no control. It was William's intention to have sailed ¹³⁷ a

¹³⁶ That Harold had rushed with vain confidence to the battle, with an inferior force, is a general assertion among our old chroniclers.

¹³⁷ At the foot of his anonymous MS. Taylor found this catalogue of the ships which were supplied for William's invasion :

By Willelmo dapifero filio Osberni sexaginta naves.
Hugone postea comite de Cestria totidem.

month sooner than he appeared. If his wishes had been fulfilled, he would have invaded Harold before the King of Norway, and would perhaps have shared his fate. For if the English king, with the disadvantages of a loss and desertion of his veteran troops, of new levies, of an inferior force, and an overweening ¹³⁸ presumption, was yet able to balance the conflict with William's most concentrated, select, and skilfully exerted strength, until night was closing; if the victory was only decided by his casual

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Hugone de Mumfort quinquaginta naves et sexaginta milites.

Romo Elemosinario Fescanni postea episcopo Lincoliensis unam navem cum viginti militibus.

Nicholao Abbate de Sancto Audoeno quindecim naves cum centum militibus.

Roberto Comite Augi sexaginta naves.

Fulcone Dauno quadraginta naves.

Geroldo Dapifero totidem.

Willelmo Comite Deurons octoginta naves.

Rogero de Mumgumeri sexaginta naves.

Rogero de Boumont sexaginta naves.

Odone Episcopo de Baios centum naves.

Roberto de Morokmer centum et viginti,

Waltero Giffardo triginta cum centum militibus.

Extra has naves quæ computatæ simul M efficiunt habuit Dux a quibusdam suis hominibus secundum possibilitatem unius cujusque multas alias naves, p. 209.

¹³⁸ One chief reason of Harold's hastening to fight before he was fully prepared, is declared to have been, that he might find the Normans before they fled out of the country. Previous to the battle, he is said to have affirmed, that he had never done any thing more willingly in his life than his coming to meet William. Taylor's Anon. Hist. 191.

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death ; how different would have been the issue, if Harold had met him with the troops which he marched against the Norwegians ! But Providence had ordained, that a new dynasty should give new manners, new connections, and new fortunes, to the English nation. Events were therefore so made to follow, that all the talents of Harold, and the force of England, should not avail against the vicissitudes intended. While Harold's fleet watched the ocean, the adverse wind kept William in port. This fleet was dispersed by its stores failing ; and at the same time the invasion of the king of Norway compelled Harold to leave his coast unguarded, and to hurry his soldiers to the north of the island. In this critical interval, while Harold was so occupied by land, and before his fleet had got revictualled, the winds became auspicious to William, and he landed in safety. Immediately after this, the Saxon fleet was enabled to sail.

HAROLD had in the mean time conquered the Norwegians ; but this very event, which seemed to insure the fate of William, became his safety. It inflated Harold's mind so as to disgust his own soldiery, and to rush to a decisive conflict in contempt of his adversary, before he was prepared to meet him. When the battle had begun, the abilities of Harold, and the bravery of his countrymen, seemed again likely to ruin the hopes of his great competitor. The death

of Harold then terminated the contest, while William, who had been in as much danger as Harold, was not penetrated by a single weapon.

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BUT it was ordained by the Supreme Director of events, that England should no longer remain insulated from the rest of Europe ; but should, for its own benefit and the improvement of mankind, become connected with the affairs of the continent. The Anglo-Saxon dynasty was therefore terminated ; and a sovereign, with great continental possessions, was led to the English throne. By the consequences of this revolution, England acquired that interest and established that influence in the transactions and fortunes of its neighbours, which have continued to the present day, with equal advantages to its inhabitants and to Europe.

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MONEY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

THE payments mentioned in Domesday-Book are stated in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings, exactly as our pecuniary calculations are now made. Twenty shillings constitute a pound, and a shilling is composed of twelve pence. The same computation occurs elsewhere. Elfric, in his translation of ' Exodus, adds, of his own authority, " They are twelve scythinga of twelve pennies;" and in the monies mentioned in the *Historia Eliensis*, edited by Gale, we find numerous passages which ascertain that a pound consisted of twenty shillings. Thus, three hides were sold by a lady to an abbot for a hundred shillings each. The owner is afterwards said to have come to receive the fifteen pounds. When seven pounds and a half only had been paid, the earldorman asked the abbot to give the lady more of her purchase money. At his request the abbot gave thirty shillings more; thus, it is added, he paid her nine pounds. On another occasion the money agreed for was thirty pounds. One hundred shillings were re-

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ceived, and twenty-five pounds were declared to remain due.²

THE Saxon money was sometimes reckoned by pennies, as the French money is now by livres. Thus, in one charta, three plough-lands are conveyed for three thousand pennies. In another, eighty acres were bought for three hundred and eighty-five pennies. In another, one thousand four hundred and fifty pennies occur.³

THE name for money, which is oftenest met with in the charters, is the Mancus. On this kind of money we have one curious passage of Elfric: he says, five pennies make one shilling, and thirty pennies one mancus.⁴ This would make the mancus six shillings. The passage in the laws of Henry the First intimates the same.⁵ Two passages in the Anglo-Saxon laws seem to confirm Elfric's account of the mancus being thirty pennies; for an ox is valued at a mancus in one, and at thirty pence in another.⁶

BUT there is an apparent contradiction in five pennies making a shilling, if twelve pennies amounted to the same sum. The objection would be unanswerable, but that, by the laws of Alfred, it is clear that there were two sorts of pennies, the greater and the less; for the violation of a man's borg was to be compensated by five pounds, mærra peninga, of the *larger* pennies.⁷

THE mark is sometimes mentioned; this was half a

² 3 Gale, Script. p. 473. and see 485. 488.

³ Astle's MS. Chart. Nos. 7. 22. 28.

⁴ Hickes, Diss. Ep. 109. and Wan. Cat. MS. 113.

⁵ Debent reddi secundum legem triginta solidi ad Manbotam, id est, hodie 5 mancæ. Wilk. p. 265. So p. 249.

⁶ Wilk. p. 66. and 126. Yet this passage is not decisive, because the other accompanying valuations do not correspond.

⁷ Ibid. 35.

pound, according to the authors cited by ⁸ Du Fresne; it is stated to be eight ounces by Aventinus. ⁹

THE money mentioned in our earliest law consists of shillings, and a minor sum called scætta. In the laws of Ina, the pening occurs, and the pund as a weight. In those of Alfred the pund appears as a quantity of money, as well as the shilling and the penny; but the shilling is the usual notation of his pecuniary punishments. In his treaty with the Danes, the half-mark of gold, and the mancus, are the names of the money; as is the ora in the Danish compact with Edward. In the laws of Ethelstan, we find the thrymsa, as well as the shilling and the penny; the scætta and the pund. The shilling, the penny, and the pound, appear under Edgar. The ora and the healf-marc pervade the Northumbrian laws. In the time of Ethelred, the pound is frequently the amount of the money noticed. The shilling and penny, the healf-marc, and the ora, also occur. ¹⁰

THE Anglo-Saxon wills that have survived to us mention the following money: In the archbishop Elfric's will we find five pundum, and fifty mancusan of gold. ¹¹ In Wynflæd's will, the mancæs of gold, the pund, the healfes pundes wyrthne, and sixty pennega wyrth, are noticed. In one part she desires that there should be put, in a cup which she bequeaths, healf pund penega, or half a pound of pennies. In another part she mentions sixteen mancsum of red gold; also thirty penega wyrth. ¹²

IN Thurstan's will, twelf pund be getale occurs. In Godric's we perceive a mark of gold, thirteen pounds,

⁸ Du Fresne, Gloss. ii. p. 437.

⁹ Ann. Boi. lib. vi. p. 524.

¹⁰ See Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Sax. passim.

¹¹ MS. Cott. Claud. B. 6. p. 103. ¹² Hickes, Gram. Præf.

and sixty-three pennies.¹³ In Byrhtic's will, sixty mancos of gold and thirty mancys goldes are mentioned; and several things are noticed, as of the value of so many gold mancus. Thus, a bracelet of eighty mancysan goldes, and a necklace of forty mancysa; a hand secs of three pounds is also bequeathed, and ten hund penega.¹⁴

IN Wulfar's will, the mancus of gold is applied in the same way to mark the value of the things bequeathed, and also to express money.¹⁵ The mancus of gold is the money given in Elfhelm's will; in Dux Elfred's, pennies; in Ethelwyrd, both pennies and the pund occur. In Ethelstan's testament we find the mancusa of gold, the pund of silver, the pund be getale, and pennies.¹⁶

IN the charters we find pennies, mancusa, pounds, shillings, and sicli, mentioned. In one we find one hundred sicli of the purest gold¹⁷; and in another, four hundred sicli in pure silver.¹⁸ In a third, fifteen hundred of shillings in silver are mentioned, as if the same with fifteen hundred sicli.¹⁹ The shilling also at another time appears as if connected with gold, as seventy shillings of auri obrizi.²⁰ Once we have two pounds of the purest gold.²¹ The expressions of pure gold, or the purest gold, are often added to the mancos.

That the pound was used as an imaginary value of money, is undoubted. One grant says, that an abbot gave in money quod valuit, what was of the value of one hundred and twenty pounds.²² Another has four pound

¹³ Hickes, Diss. Ep. 29, 30.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 51.

¹⁵ Hickes, Diss. Ep. p. 51.

¹⁶ Sax. Dict. App.

¹⁷ The late Mr. Astle's MS. Charters, No. 10.

¹⁸ App. to Bede. p. 770.

¹⁹ MS. Claud. C. 9.

²⁰ Mr. Astle's Charters, No. 28. b.

²¹ Ibid. p. 25.

²² MS. Claud. C. 9.

of lic-wyrthes feos²³, which means money or property agreeable to the party receiving it. We read also of fifteen pounds of silver, gold, and chattels²⁴; also sixty pounds in pure gold and silver.²⁵ Sometimes the expression occurs, which we still use in our deeds, "One hundred pounds of *lawful money*."²⁶

As no Anglo-Saxon gold coins have reached modern times, though of their silver coinage we have numerous specimens, it is presumed by antiquaries that none were ever made. Yet it is certain that they had plenty of gold, and it perpetually formed the medium of their purchases and gifts. My belief is, that gold was used in the concerns of life, in an uncoined state²⁷, and to such a species of gold money I would refer such passages as these: fifty "mancussa asodenes gold," "sexies viginti marcarum auri pondo," "appensuram novem librarum purissimi auri juxta magnum pondus Normanorum," "eighty mancusa auri purissimi et sex pondus electi argenti," "duo uncias auri." I think that silver also was sometimes passed in an uncoined state, from such intimations as these: "twa pund mere hwites seolfres," and the above-mentioned "sex pondus electi argenti." The expressions that pervade Domesday-book imply, in my apprehension, these two species of money, the coined and the uncoined. Seventy libras pensatas, like two uncias auri, are obviously money by weight. But money ad numerum, or arsuram, I interpret to be coined money; also the pund be getale. The phrases, sex libras ad pensum et arsuram et triginta libras arsas et pensatas, appear to me to express the

²³ Heming. Chart. p. 180.

²⁴ 3 Gale, p. 410.

²⁵ Heming. Chart. p. 8.

²⁶ Ingulf, p. 35.

²⁷ One coin has been adduced as a Saxon gold coin. See Pegge's Remains. But its pretensions have not been admitted.

indicated weight of coined money. The words *arsas* and *arsuram* I understand to allude to the assay of coin in the mint.

WHETHER the *mancus* was, like the *pund*, merely a weight, and not a coin, and was applied to express, in the same manner as the word *pound*, a certain quantity of money, coined or uncoined, I cannot decide; but I incline to think that it was not a coin. Indeed there is one passage which shows that it was a weight, "*duas bradiolas aureas fabrefactas quas pensarent xlv mancusas.*"²⁸ I consider the two sorts of pennies as the only coins of the Anglo-Saxons above their copper coinage, and am induced to regard all their other denominations of money as weighed or settled quantities of uncoined metal.²⁹

THAT money was coined by the Anglo-Saxons in the octarchy, and in every reign afterwards, is clear from those which remain to us. Most of them have the mint-master's name. It does not appear to me certain, that they had coined money before their invasion of England, and conversion.

It was one of Ethelstan's laws, that there should be one coinage in all the king's districts, and that no mint should be outside the gate. If a coiner was found guilty of fraud, his hand was to be cut off, and fastened to the mint smithery.³⁰ In the time of Edgar, the law was repeated, that the king's coinage should be uniform; it was added, that no one should refuse it, and that it should measure like that of Winchester.³¹ It has been

²⁸ Heming. Chart. p. 86.

²⁹ It is the belief of an antiquarian friend, who has paid much attention to this subject, that even the Saxon *scyllinga* was a nominal coin; as he assures me no silver coin of that value has been found which can be referred to the Saxon times.

³⁰ Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 59.

³¹ Ibid. p. 78.

mentioned of Edgar, that finding the value of the coin in his reign much diminished by the fraud of clipping, he had new coins made all over England.

WE may add a few particulars of the coins which occur in Domesday-book. Sometimes a numeration is made very similar to our own, as 11*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* Sometimes pounds and sometimes shillings are mentioned by themselves. In other places, some of the following denominations are inserted :

Una marka argenti,
 Tres markas auri,
 Novem uncias auri,
 c solidos et unam unciam auri,
 xxiv libras et unciam auri,
 xx libras et unam unciam auri, et un. marcum,
 xxv libras ad pond.
 l libras appretiatas,
 xiv libras arsas et pensatas, et v libras ad numerum,
 cvi libras arsas et pensatas, et x libras ad numerum,
 xxii libras de alb. denariis, ad pensum hujus comitis,
 xvi libras de albo argento.
 xlvii libras de albo argento xvi denariis minus,
 xxiii lib. denar. de xx in ora,
 xv lib. de xx in ora,
 iii solid. de den. xx in ora, et xxvi denar. ad numerum,
 v oris argenti,
 i denarium,
 i obolum,
 i quadrantem,
 viii libras et xx denar.³²

³² The meaning of arsas and arsuram, as applied to money, is explained in the Black Book of the Exchequer to be the *assay* of money. The money might be sufficient in number and weight, yet not in quality. It by no means followed that twenty shillings, which constituted a pound weight, was

It seems reasonable to say, that such epithets as *purissimi auri*, and *æsodenes gold*, that is, melted gold, refer to money paid and melted.

BUT if the Saxon silver coins were only the larger and smaller pennies, what then was the *scyllinga*? In the translation of Genesis, the word is applied to express the Hebrew shekels.³³ In the New Testament, thirty pieces of silver, which the Gothic translates by the word *SIAMBKIN*, or silver, the Saxon version calls ³⁴ *scyllinga*. The etymology of the word *scyllinga* would lead us to suppose it to have been a certain quantity of uncoined

in fact a pound of silver, because copper or other metal might be intermixed when there was no examination. For this reason, the books say that the bishop of Salisbury instituted the *arsura* in the reign of Henry the First. It is added, that if the examined money was found to be deficient above sixpence in the pound, it was not deemed lawful money of the king. *Liber Niger Scacarii*, cited by Du Cange, Gloss. 1. p. 343. The bishop cannot, however, have invented the *arsura* in the reign of Henry, because Domesday-book shows that it was known in the time of the Conqueror. In Domesday-book it appears that the king had this right of assay only in a few places. Perhaps the bishop, in a subsequent reign, extended it to all money paid into the exchequer.

An intelligent friend has favoured me with the following extract from Domesday: "*Totum manerium T. R. E. et post valuit xl libras. Modo similiter xl lib. Tamen reddit l lib. ad arsuram et pensum, quæ valent lxx lib.*" Domesday, vol. i. fo. 15. b. This passage seems to express, that 65*l.* of coined money was only worth 50*l.* in pure silver, according to the assay of the mint. Whether this depreciation of the coin existed in the Saxon times, or whether it followed from the disorders and exactions of the Norman conquest, I have not ascertained.

³³ See Genesis, in Thwaite's *Heptateuch*.

³⁴ Matthew, xxvii. 3.

silver; for, whether we derive it from *reylan*, to divide, or *reale*, a scale, the idea presented to us by either word is the same; that is, so much silver cut off, as in China, and weighing so much.

I WOULD therefore presume the *scyllinga* to have been a quantity of silver, which, when coined, yielded five of the larger pennies, and twelve of the smaller.

THE Saxon word *scæt* or *sceatt*, which occurs in the earliest laws as a small definite quantity of money, is mostly used to express money generally. I would derive it from *reæt*, a part or division; and I think it meant a definite piece of metal originally in the uncoined state. The *sceat* and the *scyllinga* seem to have been the names of the Saxon money in the Pagan times, before the Roman and French ecclesiastics had taught them the art of coining.

THE value of the *scæt* in the time of Ethelbert would appear, from one sort of reasoning, to have been the twentieth part of a shilling. His laws enjoin a penalty of twenty *scyllinga* for the loss of the thumb, and three *scyllinga* for the thumb-nail. It is afterwards declared that the loss of the great toe is to be compensated by ten *scyllinga*, and the other toes by half the price of the fingers. It is immediately added, that for the nail of the great toe thirty *sceatta* must be paid to bot.³⁵

Now as the legislator expresses that he is estimating the toes at half the value of the fingers, and shows that he does so in fixing the compensation of the thumb and the great toe, we may infer, that his thirty *sceattas* for the nail of the great toe were meant to be equal to half of the three *scyllinga* which was exacted for the thumb-nail. According to this reasoning, twenty *sceatta* equalled one *scyllinga*.

³⁵ Wilkins, Leg. Anglo-Sax. p. 6.

ABOUT three centuries later, the scætta appears somewhat raised in value, and to be like one of their smaller pennies; for the laws of Æthelstan declare thirty thousand scætta to be cxx punda.³⁶ This gives two hundred and fifty sceatta to a pound, or twelve and a half to a scyllinga. Perhaps, therefore, the sceat was the smaller penny, and the pening, properly so called, was the larger one.

WE may be curious to enquire into the etymology of the pening. The word occurs for coin in many countries. In the Franco-theotisc, it occurs in Otfrid as pfenning³⁷; and on the continent one gold pfenning was declared to be worth ten silver pfennings.³⁸ It occurs in Icelandic, in the ancient Edda, as penning.³⁹

THE Danes still use penge as their term for money or coin; and if we consider the Saxon penig as their only silver coin, we may derive the word from the verb *punian*, to beat or knock, which may be deemed a term applied to metal coined, similar to the Latin, *cudere*.⁴⁰

THAT the Anglo-Saxons did not use coined money before the Roman ecclesiastics introduced the custom, is an idea somewhat warranted by the expression they applied to coin. This was *mynet*, a coin, and from this, *mynetian*, to coin, and *mynetere*, a person coining. These words are obviously the Latin *moneta*

³⁶ Wilkins, *Leg. Anglo-Sax.* p. 72.

³⁷ It is used by Otfrid, l. 3. c. 14. p. 188.

³⁸ I. Alem. prov. c. 299. cited by Schilter in his *Glossary*, p. 657.

³⁹ *Ægis drecka*, ap. *Edda Sæmundi*, p. 168.

⁴⁰ Schilter has quoted an author who gives a similar etymology from another language, "*Pænings nomine pecunia tantum numerata significat, a pāna, quod est cudere, signare.*" *Gloss. Teut.* p. 657.

and monetarius; and it usually happens that when one nation borrows such a term from another, they are indebted to the same source for the knowledge of the thing which it designates.

AN expression of Bede once induced me to doubt if it did not imply a Saxon gold coin. He says that a lady, foretelling her death, described that she was addressed in a vision by some men, who said to her, that they were come to take with them the aureum numisma (meaning herself) which had come thither out of Kent. This complimentary trope Alfred translates by the expressions, *gyldene mynet*.⁴¹

THE passage certainly proves, that both Bede and Alfred knew of gold coins; and it certainly can be hardly doubted, that when gold coins circulated in other parts of Europe, some from the different countries would find their way into England. The use of the word aureos, in the *Historia Eliensis*, implies gold coin⁴²; and that coins called aurei were circulated in Europe, is clear from the journal of the monks who travelled from Italy to Egypt in the ninth or tenth century. In this they mention that the master of the ship they sailed in charged them six aureos for their passage.⁴³ But whether these aurei were those coined at Rome or Constantinople, or were the coins of Germany or France, or whether England really issued similar ones from its mint, no authority, yet known, warrants us to decide.

THAT the pennies of different countries varied in value, is proved by the same journal. Bernard, its author, affirms that it was then the custom of Alexandria to take money by weight, and that six of the solidi

⁴¹ Bede, l. 3. c. 8. and Transl. p. 531.

⁴² L aureos, p. 485. x aureos, ib. lxxx aureis, p. 484. c aureos, p. 486.

⁴³ See second volume of this history, p. 300.

and denarii, which they took with them, weighed only three of those at Alexandria.⁴⁴

THE silver penny was afterwards called, in the Norman times, an esterling, or sterling; but the time when the word began to be applied to money is not known.⁴⁵

THERE has been a variety of opinions about the value of the Saxon pound.⁴⁶ We have proof, from Domesday, that in the time of the Confessor it consisted of twenty solidi or shillings. But Dr. Hickes contends that the Saxon pound consisted of sixty shillings⁴⁷, because, by the Saxon law in Mercia, the king's were gild was one hundred and twenty pounds, and amounted to the same as six thegns, whose were was twelve hundred shillings each.⁴⁸ And certainly this passage has the force of declaring that the king's were was seven thousand two hundred shillings, and that these were equivalent to one hundred and twenty pounds; and according to this passage, the pound in Mercia contained sixty shillings. Other authors⁴⁹ assert that the pound had but forty-eight shillings.

⁴⁴ See second volume of this history, p. 300.

⁴⁵ The laws of Edward I. order the penny of England to be round, without clipping, and to weigh thirty-two grains of wheat, in the middle of the ear. Twenty of these were to make an ounce, and twelve ounces a pound. Spelm. Gloss. p. 241.

⁴⁶ The Welsh laws of Hoel dda use punt or pund as one of their terms for money. They have also the word ariant, which means literally silver, and ceiniawg, both these seem to imply a penny. See Wotton's *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 16. 20. 21. 27. Their word for a coin is bath.

⁴⁷ Hickes, *Dissert. Ep.* p. 111.

⁴⁸ Wilkins, *Leg. Anglo-Sax.* p. 72.

⁴⁹ As Camden, Spelman, and Fleetwood.

WE have mentioned that a scyllinga, or shilling, consisted of five greater pennies, or of twelve smaller ones. But in the time of the Conqueror the English shilling had but four pennies: "15 solz de solt Engleis co est quer deners."⁵⁰ This passage occurs in the Conqueror's laws. It has been ingeniously attempted to reconcile these contradictions, by supposing that the value of the shilling was that which varied, and that the pound contained sixty shillings of four pennies in a shilling, or forty-eight shillings of five pennies in a shilling.⁵¹ To which we may add, twenty shillings of twelve pence in a shilling. These different figures, respectively multiplied together, give the same amount of two hundred and forty pennies in a pound. Yet though this supposition is plausible, it cannot be true, if the shilling was only a nominal sum, like the pound, because such variations as these attach to coined money, and not the terms merely used in numeration.

THE styca, the helfling, and the feorthling, are also mentioned. The styca and feorthling are mentioned in a passage in Mark. "The poor widow threw in two stycas, that is, feorthling peninges, or the fourth part of a penny."⁵² The hælfing occurs in Luke: "Are not two sparrows sold for a helflinge?"⁵³ We cannot doubt that these were copper monies.

THE thrymsa is reckoned by Hickes to be the third part of a shilling, or four pence.⁵⁴ Yet the passage which makes the king's were thirty thousand sceatta, compared

⁵⁰ Wilkins, Leg. Anglo-Sax. p. 221. In the copy of these laws in Ingulf, p. 89. the expression is quer *bener* deners, or four better pennies.

⁵¹ Clarke's preface to Wotton's Leges Wallicæ.

⁵² Mark, chap. xii. 42.

⁵³ Luke, chap. xii. 6.

⁵⁴ Hickes, Diss. Ep.

with the other which reckons it as thirty thousand thrymsa ⁵⁵, seems to express that the thrymsa and the scætta were the same.

On this dark subject of the Anglo-Saxon coinage, we must however confess, that the clouds which have long surrounded it have not yet been removed. The passages in Alfred's and in the Conqueror's laws imply that there were two sorts of pennies, the mærra or bener pennies, and the smaller ones. We have many Anglo-Saxon silver coins of these species; but no others.

SOME ecclesiastical persons, as well as the king, and several places, had the privilege of coining. In the laws of Ethelstan, the places of the mints in his reign are thus enumerated:

“ In Canterbury there are seven myneteras; four of the king's, two of the bishop's, and one of the abbot's.

In Rochester there are three; two of the king, and one of the bishop.

In London eight,
In Winchester six,
In Lewes two,
In Hastings one,
Another in Chichester,
In Hampton two,
In Wareham two,
In Exeter two,
In Shaftesbury two,
Elsewhere one in the other burghs.” ⁵⁶

In Domesday-book we find these monetarii mentioned:

Two at Dorchester,
One at Bridport,
Two at Wareham,
Three at Shaftesbury.

⁵⁵ Wilkins, Leg. Anglo-Sax. p. 72. and 71.

⁵⁶ Wilkins, Leg. Anglo-Sax. p. 59.

Each of these gave to the king twenty shillings and one mark of silver when money was coined.

THE monetarii at Lewes paid twenty shillings each.

ONE Suetman is mentioned as a monetarius in Oxford.

AT Worcester, when money was coined, each gave to London fifteen shillings for cuneis to receive the money.

AT Hereford there were seven monetarii, of whom one was the bishop's. When money was renewed, each gave eighteen shillings, pro cuneis recipiendis; and for one month from the day in which they returned, each gave the king twenty shillings, and the bishop had the same of his man. When the king went into the city, the monetarii were to make as many pennies of his silver as he pleased. The seven in this city had their sac and soc. When the king's monetarius died, the king had his heriot: and if he died without dividing his estate, the king had all.

HUNTINGDON had three monetarii, rendering thirty shillings between the king and comes.

IN Shrewsbury the king had three monetarii, who, after they had bought the cuneos monetæ, as other monetarii of the country, on the fifteenth day gave to the king twenty shillings each; and this was done when the money was coining.

THERE was a monetarius at Colchester.

AT Chester there were seven monetarii, who gave to the king and comes seven pounds extra firmam, when money was turned.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ For these, see Domesday-book, under the different places.

In April 1817, a plowman working in a field near Dorking, in Surry, struck his plough against a wooden box which was

found to contain nearly seven hundred Saxon silver coins, or pennies, of the following kings:

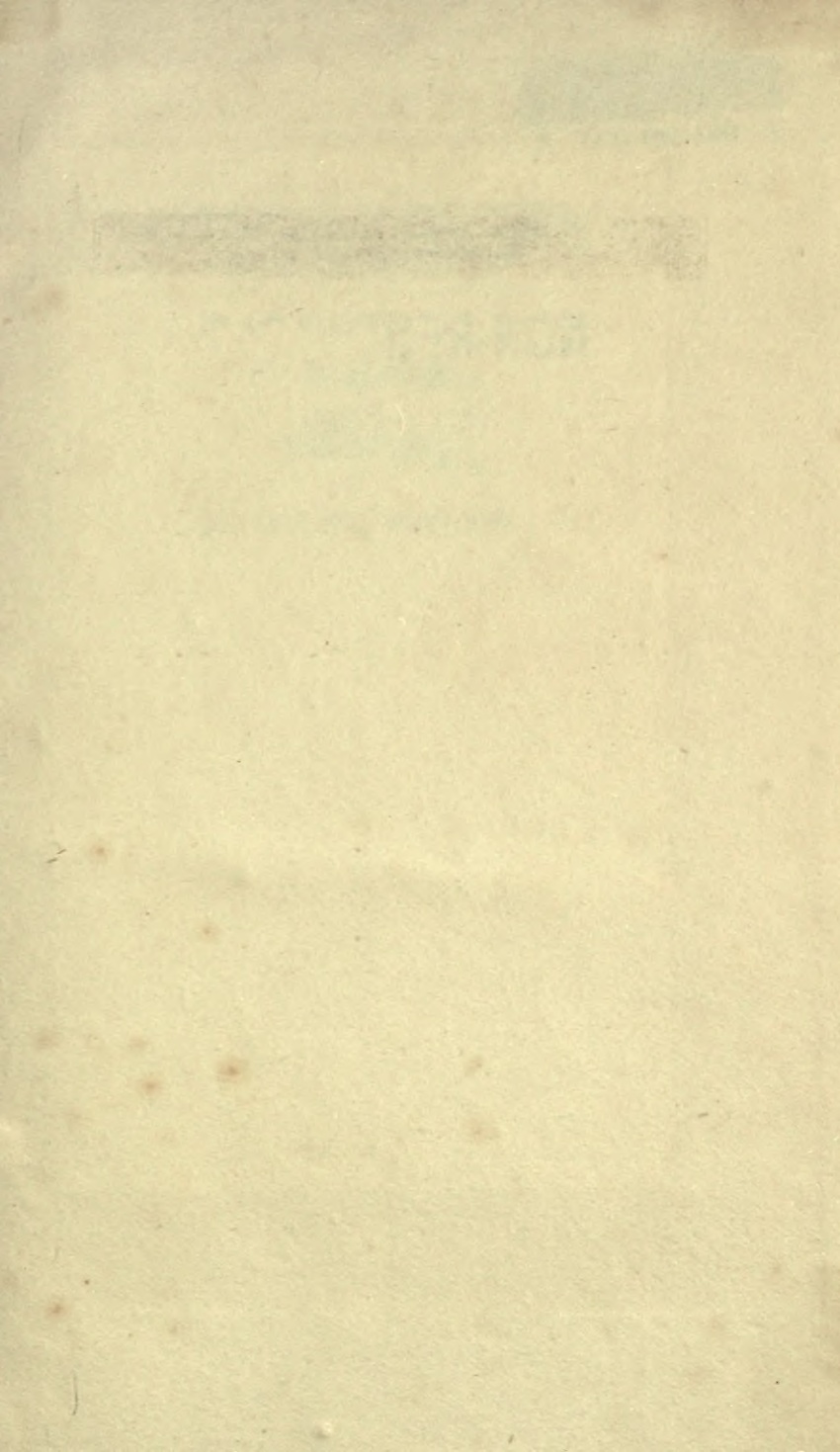
Ethelweard of Wessex,	16	Edmund, E. Angl.	3
Ceolulf of Mercia,	1	Ethelstan Do.	3
Biornwulf Do.	1	Ceolneth A. B. Cant.	86
Wiglaf Do.	1	Eegbeorht Wess.	20
Berhtulf Do.	23	Ethelwulf	265
Burgred Do.	1	Ethelbearht	249
		Pepin K. of Soissons.	1

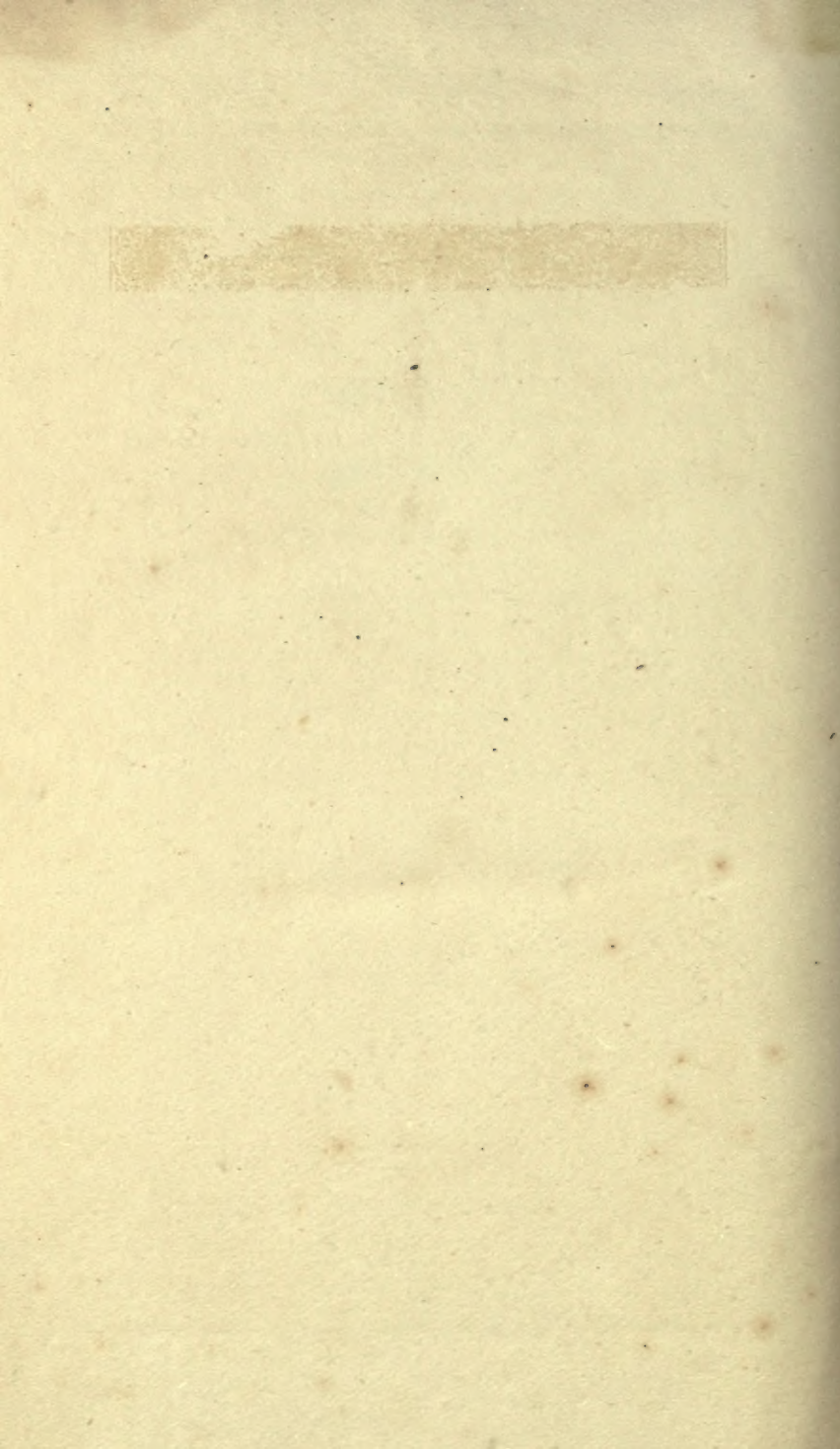
with about forty more that were dispersed. See Mr. T. Coombe's letter in *Arehol.* V. xix. p. 110.

But the *Annals of the Coinage*, by the late Rev. R. Ruding, give the best account and plates of the Anglo-Saxon Coins.

Since this work was published, about the beginning of this year, 1820, a number of old silver coins, nine silver bracelets, and a thick silver twine, were found by a peasant, on digging a woody field in Bolstads Socken, in Sweden. Of the legible coins, eighty-seven were Anglo-Saxon ones. Eighty-three of these bear the date of 1005, and are of king Ethelred's reign; and two of them of his father's, king Edgar. The king of Sweden has purchased them; and they are now deposited in the Royal Cabinet of Antiquities at Stockholm.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





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